

J.C. PHILPOT
SERMONS VOLUME 2

1841 to 1842

J.C. Philpot

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Sermons

Volume 2
1841-1842

Strict and Particular Baptist Minister
For 26 years

He held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland) Strict and Particular Baptists

Was the Joint editor of the Gospel Standard Magazine, launched in 1835, with John Mackenzie, till 1849 when he became the sole editor.

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PO14 3AE
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Charles Philpot (1802 – 1869) was known as “The Seceder”. He resigned from the Church of England in 1835 and became a Strict & Particular Baptist minister.



J C Philpot

While with the Church of England he was a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. After becoming a Strict and Particular Baptist he became the Editor of the Gospel Standard magazine and served in that capacity for twenty years.

Educated at Oxford University, he was elected a fellow of Worcester College, and appeared to have a brilliant scholastic career before him. But he was brought into solemn concern spiritually and the Lord led him into the ministry. He first preached in the Established Church at Stadhampton (Oxfordshire). In 1835, however, he was constrained, for the truth's sake, to sever his connection with the Church of England and to resign his curacy and his fellowship. The letter to the provost stating his reasons was published and went into several editions.

The same year, he was baptized by John Warburton at Allington (Wilts). The rest of his life was spent ministering among the Strict Baptists. For 26 years, he held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland). In addition for over twenty years,

he was editor of "The Gospel Standard", where many of his sermons first appeared.

"My desire is to exalt the grace of God; to proclaim salvation alone through Jesus Christ; to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and hopelessness of man in a state of nature; to describe the living experience of the children of God in their trials, temptations, sorrows, consolations and blessings."

J. C. Philpot.

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20 THE CHANNEL OF GOSPEL BLESSINGS

Preached , at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street
On Lord's Day Evening,
June 27, 1841

*"The election hath obtained it, and the rest were
blinded."*

Romans 11:7

The doctrines of discriminating grace always have been, and to a certain extent always will be, opposed by the generality of the professing world. They are so humbling to the pride of man, they are so exclusive of human merit, they so beat down creature righteousness, they so cut up all the boasted freedom of the will, that the great majority of those who profess religion will hate and resist them. But we should greatly err if we supposed that all who received them were the children of the living God. We have this strikingly set forth in the history of Gideon. Gideon was raised up by the Lord as an instrument to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites; and a large army gathered together under his banner. But the Lord commanded a solemn proclamation to be made, that every one "who was fearful and afraid should return, and depart early from Mount Gilead" (Jud. 7:3). In obedience to this proclamation, out of this vast number two and twenty thousand left the camp, forsook the banners of the Lord, and returned to their own homes: striking emblem, apt illustration of all who make a nominal profession of religion, and endure not to the end, but, though "armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle," and belong to those of whom the Lord says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him!" But the army of Gideon was too numerous still. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" and the assembled multitude were yet so numerous, that had they all continued under Gideon's banner, it would have taken from the Lord's glory. The Lord therefore

commanded Gideon to try them by bringing them down to the water and to take notice how this assembled multitude partook of the flowing stream to which he led them down. The trial which the Lord gave was this: those that knelt down, and lapped with their tongues, and those that partook of the water by taking of it in their hands. Of this assembled multitude ten thousand lapped with their tongues as a dog lappeth; and three hundred only satisfied their thirst by dipping their hands into the stream, and drinking the water out of the palms of their hands. This seems to be a striking illustration of the different way in which the truth is received by the mere nominal professor and the living soul. The one lapped as a dog lappeth. They threw themselves with their bodies all along upon the earth amid the mud and mire, and thrust their "unclean lips" Isa 6:5 into the water, so as to drink it down, without anything to intervene betwixt their mouth and the stream that flowed at their feet; and thus lapping as a dog lappeth, they showed that they were those characters spoken of in Scripture, "without are dogs" (Rev. 22:15). But there was a small company that bowed down upon their knees, and partook of the water by using their hands as a medium to bring it to their lips; doubtless implying the posture of reverence and godly fear, and the hand of faith whereby the truth is received in the love of it; showing that they did not receive the waters of truth in a natural manner, did not fall headlong in the mud and mire, did not eagerly and greedily swallow it down as the dog lappeth; but that there was godly fear in exercise, as well as the intervention of living faith; and that they did not gulp down at one unintermitted draught enough to satisfy thirst, but partook of it little by little, at intervals, receiving only just so much as repeated acts of faith procured them. Thus in our day there is a vast multitude of those who profess the name of the Lord, who are bitterly opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus, who are "fearful and afraid" of the cross; and as such, if they live and die in their cowardice, will have their part amongst "the fearful literally 'cowards' and unbelieving," who shall be cast into "the lake which burneth

with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). And yet of those who seem to stand by the Lord's banner, there is a very large assemblage who receive the truth, not by the intervention of faith, not by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, but receive it in a carnal manner into their judgment, without the feeling application and spiritual revelation of it to their souls. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Solemn words! It should indeed be a matter of heart inquiry, whether those of us who profess to fear the name of the Lord are included in this small remnant; whether we really belong to that "election" which "hath obtained it." For if we do not belong to that number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds, we shall die in our sins, and be thrust down into that fearful place where hope never enters. It is therefore a matter of solemn inquiry with one that fears God, who knows what it is to have divine realities commended to his conscience, who stands at times on the brink of eternity—it is with such a matter of deep inquiry, of earnest questioning, of anxious thought, whether he has a well-grounded scriptural evidence that he belongs to that happy number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds; and there will be many anxious struggles, many fervent wrestlings, many vehement cries, before it is powerfully and sweetly ratified in the court of conscience, that we belong to that "number which no man can number;" that we have an interest in the blood and love of the Redeemer.

The apostle had been speaking in the preceding chapters concerning righteousness. For this is his grand topic in the epistle to the Romans—the way in which a sinner is accounted righteous before God. He draws a sketch of the difference betwixt those who were really accounted righteous in God's sight, and those who were seeking to obtain righteousness by the works of the law; and he shows that those who sought righteousness by the works of the law, stumbled at that stumbling-stone, that they obtained not that which they sought, and that the Gentiles who sought not after righteousness, had obtained righteousness. Nor does he leave

it there, but traces it all up to the sovereignty of God, “in having mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and “having compassion on whom he will have compassion.” And when one replies in a fit of passionate rebellion, “Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?” he meets him in a moment with this appeal to his conscience, “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?”

We will, then, with God’s blessing, endeavour to show what the election hath obtained; and how the rest are blinded. By the word “election” here, the apostle means, not the choice of God, but those who are the objects of that choice. It is a Hebrew idiom, substantives being often used in that language instead of adjectives; for instance, “We are the true circumcision,” instead of those that are truly circumcised. So again, “The mountain of my holiness,” instead of, “My holy mountain.” The writers of the New Testament were Jews by birth, and often use Hebrew idioms, though they wrote in Greek. Thus, when the apostle speaks of the “election” having “obtained it,” he means, not that the choice of God had obtained it, but that the chosen vessels of mercy, the objects, the favoured objects of that election had obtained it; and thus the word “election” here means simply the elect. The elect, then, have obtained certain blessings, and they are the only persons who have obtained them. Let us see what these blessings are, and how they obtain them.

1. The grand point which the apostle speaks of here is, that they have obtained righteousness. This must always be a matter of anxious inquiry with a convinced sinner, how he can be righteous before God; because wherever sin is opened up in a man, and laid as a burden upon his conscience, the effect will be a discovery of unrighteousness, and a deep conviction working with power in his soul, that unless he can stand righteous before God, he never can enter into the abode of him who is perfect righteousness and complete purity. The “election,” then, “hath obtained righteousness,”

that is, through the imputation of Christ's obedience, they stand righteous and accepted before God, "without spot or blemish, or any such thing;" the garment of the Redeemer's obedience covering them and shrouding them from the eye of God, so that he beholds not iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21). This all the elect have obtained, freely given to them by their God and Father in the Son of his love. But the word "obtained" seems also to point to some personal reception of it. It is one thing to be righteous before God in his eyes; it is another thing to have received the manifestation of this righteousness in our conscience. Now, however true and glorious the doctrine is, that all the elect of God stand righteous in Christ's righteousness, the living soul can never be satisfied with the doctrine in the letter, nor can he ever rest until he has the manifestation and discovery of it with power to his heart by the Holy Ghost. And here is that eternal line which separates the living from the dead; here is that narrow, narrow path which distinguishes the heaven-born children from those who are wrapped up in a nominal profession, that the living family must have power, whilst others are satisfied with form, that the living family must have heavenly teaching, whilst those that are dead in sin can be contented with seeing truth In the Scriptures, without a feeling application of it with dew and savour to their hearts. All the living family, then, are brought into a state, wherein they are made to need righteousness. The Lord opened his ministry with, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The holy law of God, applied with power to their consciences, discovers to them what sin is, and slays them as having personally transgressed his righteous commandments. When the Lord has thus slaughtered them in their consciences, he raises up in their souls a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness; he pours out upon them a Spirit of grace and of supplications; he opens up to their understanding that there is a righteousness stored up in Christ; he casts a light upon the Scriptures of truth, and shows to them that there is no way of justification but that by Christ. And setting before

their eyes this glorious object, he kindles, by his secret work upon their hearts, longings, desires, hungerings, thirstings, and breathings after the manifestation of this righteousness. No man ever got a feeling enjoyment of Christ's righteousness imputed to him, who has not passed under solemn convictions of his guilt before God; and if ever you got at Christ's righteousness without travelling in the path of condemnation, be assured that you have never arrived where you are by the Spirit's teaching. How deep these convictions shall be, or how long these convictions shall last, the Scripture does not tell us, nor do I deem it possible to set up a standard to measure them by; but they shall be so deep as to empty a man completely of all his own righteousness, and they shall last so long as to strip him of everything in which he can boast, and to which he can look with satisfaction.

2 Again the elect have obtained pardon of their sins. For God will pardon all those whom he reserves. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." This is the grand doctrine of the Scriptures; to this all the types bear witness; of this all the prophecies are full; the enjoyment of this is that which constitutes a foretaste of eternal bliss. All the living family then will be brought, before they close their eyes in death, to a sweet manifestation of the pardon of their sins. If a man lives and dies without a discovery to his soul of the blotting out of his iniquities, he will never enter into the presence of God after death. But in order to obtain a manifestation of this pardon, we must travel in that path which God has traced out in the Scriptures of truth. The blood of Jesus is not to be approached with presumptuous hands. His blessed sacrifice and propitiation is not to be looked upon with the eyes of the flesh. He will have in his sanctuary no intruding worshippers; the veil shall be over the Holy of Holies, and none but "a priest unto God" shall ever enter "by the new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," to look at the ark of the covenant, sprinkled with atoning

blood. Before the soul can know anything by a divine revelation of the pardon of its sins, it must have the fear of God implanted from above, whereby it approaches him with holy reverence and trembling apprehension of the wrath to come. The conscience must be made tender and alive, so as to feel the weight and evil of transgression; sin must be opened up in its awful colours, discovered in its guilt, and laid upon the soul as a heavy burden; and if a man has not travelled in that path he has never yet arrived at that secret sanctuary where God manifests himself in the face of Jesus Christ, nor has he ever looked with anointed eyes upon the mercy-seat, and the Shechinah, the divine cloud that rests upon it. This is the grand struggle, the painful conflict which exercises so many of the quickened family of God "Has the Lord pardoned my sins? Am I an accepted worshipper? Has the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed me? Do I stand before God, with all my sins cast into the depths of the sea?" This will be a point of solemn inquiry, anxious meditation, midnight wrestling, and a pouring out of the soul, at times, in vehement cries, that the Lord would reveal it, and apply it, and manifest it, by his own Spirit with power to the conscience. Where pardon of sin is manifested, the conscience is purged "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Try yourselves by that test. Say you, "I have no doubt my sins are pardoned?" Look in the mirror of God's word. Have the fruits followed? Have the effects that God has pointed out been visible? Was conscience ever purged, that is, was all guilt taken away? Were you able to come before God, without guilt, without condemnation without slavish fear, without a sensation of his wrath? That is the test, to try whether the pardon of sin has been felt in your soul, whether your conscience was purified from guilt, filth, and fear, and you could come before God without any spot of guilt upon you, whether you were able to draw near with the feelings of a son and felt the Spirit of adoption enabling you to cry, "Abba, Father." But, says some living soul, "I

cannot come there; it would seem presumption in me to say ‘Abba Father.’ I have not felt what you have been speaking of, the pardon of my sins. When I come before God, I have guilt on my conscience; I often fear I shall be cast into eternal perdition; if I were to die tonight, I could not say that I should be sure to go to glory, and see Christ as he is.” Well, it is better to be there than resting in a presumptuous confidence. You had better be in spiritual bondage than in carnal liberty. You had better be under the rod of God’s law in your conscience, suffering under the sensation of his anger, and knowing experimentally the meaning of those words, “When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth” (Ps. 39:11); you had better be under the distressing feelings of guilt and bondage and wrath in your conscience, than sitting at ease in Zion, flattering yourself in false liberty, and believing that you are a pardoned, accepted child, when the Holy Ghost bears not his witness with your spirit that you are born of God.

3. Love is another blessing which the election have obtained; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that love which hath lengths and breadths and depths and heights, and yet such lengths, breadths, depths, and heights as pass all creature measure. The “election” hath obtained love; it is the free gift of God to them,—for he has loved them everlastingly; and a measure of this love be sheds abroad in the heart of every child of his, sooner or later. As the apostle speaks, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Have you ever felt the love of God in your souls? If you have felt it shed abroad there, I will tell you what it has done for you. It has made your soul burn with love to him in return; it has drawn forth the affections of your heart to embrace Jesus as your “all in all;” it has deadened the world, and all that the world can offer, in your estimation; and it has made you earnestly long to be with Christ, that you may bathe in his love, see him as he is, and enjoy him for ever. But say some, “You are setting up a standard that I cannot reach. It is true, that at times, I

have felt what I have thought to have been something like love to Christ; I do think that his name has been to me at seasons like the ointment poured forth. I can say from my heart, honestly in the sight of God, that there have been moments when Christ has been precious to my soul! but to speak of the love of God being shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, that is a standard which I cannot reach." If you have received but a drop of love, it came from the heavenly fountain; if you have had but a passing visit from Jesus, it is a testimony that you are redeemed by his blood; if his name has ever been to you as "ointment poured forth," it was the blessed Spirit who shed that fragrance abroad; and if ever, for a few fleeting moments, he has been experimentally precious to your soul, he is everlastingly yours, and you are everlastingly his. But I will put another question to you. "How are you when you have not the manifestation of his love? Can you be satisfied without it? Is it all the same to you whether you have a visitation of Christ to your soul or not? Are you as happy on the day that you receive it not, as on the day that you receive it? Can you be really at peace and rest in your soul without some testimony of it?" Then, if you say, "Yes, I can be as happy the day I receive it not, as the day I receive it; it is all one with me whether Christ manifests himself, or whether he does not manifest himself; I should be happy and cheerful without Christ, just as much as with him;" if you say that, you prove that the love of Christ was never really dropped into your heart by the Holy Spirit's manifestation; for if that love had been really shed abroad and made known to your soul by the Holy Spirit, there would be at seasons a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, in its absence; there would be an anxious sigh, a groaning inquiry, an earnest cry, and at times, as the Spirit works it, a fervent wrestling, that that love should be revealed to your heart again. But there may be some who say, "I cannot get even so far as a taste or a sip; I do not know whether I have ever tasted the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; nor can I positively say that I have really felt Christ precious to my soul; but this I feel, my deep need of him,

that I am a ruined wretch without him, that he must be my salvation or I shall utterly perish, and that without him there is nothing that I can do acceptable in God's sight." I will put to you a question also: It is easy enough to say all this, it is easy enough to use the words, but what the Lord looks at is the heart. If you are in this state spiritually, there will be, at times, in your soul, earnest sighs and cries and panting desires to know Jesus. You cannot rest upon want, poverty, and destitution as evidences, and say, "I have heard it described from the pulpit that all the people of God are not in the enjoyment of gospel liberty, do not walk in the light of God's countenance, and that many of them, if not most, have doubts and fears and disquietudes; therefore, as I have all these evidences, pardon and love will all come in good time; I can take my rest, I need not be so very anxious nor troubled." These are plague-spots, marks of death, not the spot of God's children. Where the conscience is really touched by God's finger, and brought into the searching light of his countenance, there will be the pouring out, at times, of the will unto God! that he would manifest himself; there will be the anxious inquiry whether the heart is right before him; and a restless dissatisfaction with everything short of the manifestation of Christ, and the enjoyment of his blood and love.

4. They have obtained also deliverance; deliverance from the wrath to come, deliverance from the present evil world, and from every evil word and work so as to bring them into eternal condemnation. As a testimony of this, they from time to time receive deliverances from God; and no man has a real heart-felt persuasion that he is interested in the deliverance from the wrath to come, who has not received, and does not receive some deliverances now. Every deliverance in time is an earnest of a deliverance for eternity; and if we have never received any deliverance from God, our soul must hang in doubt, and there must be room for earnest inquiry whether we are interested in the deliverance from eternal wrath. Now there are deliverances which are short of a full deliverance into gospel light and liberty; there are testimonies which leave the soul

short of “peace in believing,” and the enjoyment of that “perfect love which casteth out fear.” For instance, there are deliverances from temptation by the removal of the temptation; by power being given to resist it; by its edge being abated; by our being enabled to confess the sins that press upon our conscience, and by confession finding relief. So, also, there is at times dropped into the soul some sweetness out of Christ, which yet does not amount to a full deliverance from the temptation under which we may happen to labour. Says some soul, “I think I can come in here; I have had some deliverances; have found some manifest answers to prayer; I have been in great straits, and cried to the Lord, and the Lord has delivered me; I have passed through severe exercises, and in those exercises I have, for a few moments, or for a short season, felt the Lord’s light and power; I have had tokens that he has heard my feeble cries.” Well, these are deliverances, and if you have had but one deliverance, one answer to prayer, one testimony from the mouth of God, one soft word spoken to your soul, it is an earnest of your deliverance in Christ from eternal perdition.

These, then, are some of the blessings which the elect obtain; but God has prescribed a certain channel through which they shall obtain them. Jesus himself obtained salvation for his people through suffering. He did not come into the world as a mighty conqueror carrying all before him, accomplishing the salvation of his people without a sigh or a groan or a tear, without much anguish of body, and without much tribulation of soul; but he was a sufferer every moment of his existence upon earth, and he wrought out the salvation of his dear people through the medium of most poignant suffering. The “election,” then, has obtained God’s blessings; but, though these mercies are freely given by God, though they are irreversibly granted for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” upon his part, though they are freely given, yet the Lord has appointed a certain channel through which they flow. The channel is not the cause of them. None would mistake the course of a stream for its origin and source, and yet the river

must flow in a certain channel, or it would cease to flow at all. So the Lord has appointed a certain channel for his blessings to flow in; this channel is not the procuring cause of the blessings, but it is the mode in which the Lord bestows those blessings upon his elect. For instance, the Lord, usually speaking, does not communicate blessings to his people, except through the channel of sighs and cries and groans and wrestlings with him for the blessing. It is true that, in the first communications of grace, those find it who seek it not, for did the communication of grace to our souls depend upon our seeking it, none of the elect would receive it at all. "I am found of them that sought me not." But the Lord has appointed that his people, when quickened by his Spirit, should seek the blessings he means to bestow: "For all these things," he says, "will I, be inquired of by the house of Israel." "With supplications will I lead them." The Lord, then, has appointed prayer and supplication as a means through which he is pleased to communicate these blessings. Thus it is not a matter of freewill on our parts whether we will pray or not; nor is it a matter of duty, but it is a matter of divine teaching. We pray because the Lord himself kindles in our hearts the spirit of prayer. The Lord himself puts certain desires into our souls, pours into our hearts a Spirit of grace and supplications, and then we freely pour out what the Lord pours in. The Lord, then, before he communicates his manifested blessings to his people, works in them for the most part these two feelings, a necessity of the blessing that they want, and a hungering and thirsting and panting desire after the manifestation of that blessing. These two ideas are conveyed by the comparison of hunger. Hunger is a painful feeling; there is an absolute necessity connected with it, for if food be not supplied, the man must die. But connected with this necessity, there is a longing after food. It is not merely a painful sensation of emptiness and want; but there is a longing, a desire, an intense craving after the gratification of that want. Thus this expression, "hunger," conveys the two feelings that are wrought by the Spirit in living souls. They are brought to a feeling of want and destitution, a sense of

emptiness and sinking, unless the blessings are communicated to them. But there is something more than the necessity. Together with the want, there is a craving to enjoy food. And out of the working together of these combined feelings, there springs a fervent wrestling with the Lord, that he would communicate, and manifest, and bestow his pardon upon the soul. But the children of God may have a long season of spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst before their desires are fully satisfied. The "election" hath obtained righteousness, everlasting righteousness in Christ; but the Lord has appointed that his people should obtain the manifestation of it through deep want and through fervent intercession. So that, though the blessing is theirs already in the mind of God; though they stand righteous and accepted in Christ before all worlds; though they are freely justified from all things, yet the manifestation of it, the enjoyment of it, the rich experimental revelation of it, they may be, and often are, destitute of for weeks and months and years. Yea, many of God's pilgrims go toiling on through life, and the desired blessing is communicated only a little time before their souls are taken into the eternal enjoyment of it. The Lord sees fit that his people shall be kept humble; he will not suffer them to be deeply entangled in that awful sin of presumption, that is so rife; and, therefore, he sees good that many of his family shall, by painful exercises, be kept in a state of bondage, darkness, and unbelief; and they shall no more be able to deliver their souls out of guilt and condemnation than they would be to create a new sun. But all for wise purposes, that they may be kept back from presumptuous sins, that they may taste somewhat of the wormwood and the gall, that they may be baptized with that baptism with which the Lord himself was baptized, and drink of the cup that he drank of; and thus, when righteousness is revealed and salvation manifested, they learn what it really is, and what a power and blessedness there is in it. Many of the Lord's people go on for weeks and months and years without a clear manifestation of the pardon of their sins; and sometimes, when death stares

them in the face, or when the wrath of God against sin is deeply felt, or when things in providence takes a frowning turn, or when their souls are exercised with powerful temptations, they are cast well nigh into despair, and fear lest the blessing should never be communicated to their hearts. These very exercises, under the Spirit's teaching, work in them so as to make them dissatisfied with everything short of a manifestation. The guilt that they feel brings them to this spot, that pardon must be "something known and felt," that it must be an enjoyed manifestation from God himself, that there is a divine reality in it; and that nothing but the discovery of it with power can really bring their souls into happiness and peace. They could not learn this lesson in any other way; they could not value it. The Lord never bestows his gifts upon unthankful hearts. He prepares and exercises the souls of his children that, when the blessing comes, they shall prize it; shall estimate it, in some measure, at its due worth; and shall thank, bless, and praise God for his goodness to them, the very chief of sinners, and the basest of all wretches. So with respect to the love of God; he will teach all his people to sigh and cry and groan and plead and wrestle vehemently for the manifestation of his love to their souls; they know that it is a reality; not mere lip-language, not an unknown something just casually mentioned in God's word; but that there is a spiritual enjoyment of it through divine manifestation, and that all the elect of God have it shed abroad in their hearts before they die. Short of it, therefore, they cannot rest satisfied; short of it, they feel themselves destitute of salvation; and, therefore, until the love of God is experimentally realised and made known by the Holy Ghost to their souls, they cannot be fully persuaded that they are interested in that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. So, with respect to deliverances, the Lord has appointed a channel for them to come in, and this channel is temptation. Thus, all the elect are exercised, more or less, by temptations. From these temptations they seek for deliverance. And, as the temptation is real, so must the deliverance be real too. It is one thing to see a porter staggering

under a heavy burden in the street, and another thing to have the burden upon our own back. We might see the burden taken off, it would convey no relief to us; but were we in his place, were we staggering and sinking under the weight, the removal of the burden would be a sensible relief, and we should know the moment when we were relieved, and feel there was a hand that relieved us. So those that are burdened in their consciences with temptations and exercises, must have relief. To read how David was relieved, how Paul was relieved, how Peter was relieved, brings them no comfort; they want it as a personal matter, as a realised thing, as what is made known in their consciences, and felt with power in their hearts. The election hath obtained eternal deliverance in Christ; but when the Lord gives a deliverance in time, seals a testimony, brings in some timely help which delivers the soul, it is the sure evidence of its eternal deliverance, and ratifies and manifests it in the heart.

These, then, are some of the things which the election hath obtained; and all the elect of God who are quickened into spiritual life, are in one of these two states; they have either obtained the manifestation of these things in their consciences, or else they are travelling after the obtaining of them. God has none of those in his dear family, who are always at ease, careless and carnal, and utterly reckless whether he will bless them or not. All of his quickened children, in their measure, some more, some less, some to a deeper, others in a more shallow degree, but all of his quickened family are exercised with the things of eternity: and those of the quickened elect who have not been brought into the enjoyment of the things of Christ in their hearts and consciences, are at times, as the Spirit of the Lord works upon them, earnestly seeking that they may taste and feel and handle these divine realities in their soul. Election, then, in eternity, is the source of every blessing in time: out of it, as out of a root, grow all the branches of life in the soul. But the way in which the Lord's people get at election, and taste the sweetness of it as sealed upon their souls, is, by

passing through those straits and severe exercises, whereby they are brought to this solemn conclusion, that none but the elect are saved; and that if their names are not in the book of life, and their personal election is not experimentally made known, they are lost and ruined for ever.

II. "And the rest were blinded." Solemn words! awful declaration! Look at this assembled congregation, this large multitude. All here present are either elect or non-elect. Your names, each of you, as individuals, were either written in the Lamb's book of life before all worlds, or were written up to eternal perdition. Now, if you are a living soul, you will be exercised with this matter, and you will have a conviction in your conscience, that salvation must be revealed to you from the mouth of God; and until you get that sweet testimony in your heart, you can never feel fully persuaded of your interest in eternal realities.

"And the rest were blinded." What a multitude this comprehends! Look at God's ancient family, those who live in the vicinity of this place of worship, who dwell so thickly in streets and alleys within a circle of half a mile from this chapel—God's ancient people, the Jews! How blinded they are! We, standing in their privileges, are grafted as Gentiles into the olive tree; and they, on account of disobedience, are cut off. What a striking memorial that "the rest are blinded!" Every Jew that we meet with in the street is a standing testimony that God had "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" (John 12:40).

But when we come within the pale of the visible church, especially when we come more immediately to those whom we know, and with whom we stand in connexion; how many of these, too, are blinded! Who is so blind as the self-righteous Pharisee that expects to be saved by his own virtues! Blind he must indeed be, as the Scriptures speak, "smitten with blindness of heart (Deut. 28:28), and madness and astonishment." Blind indeed must he be, to think he can work out a righteousness that shall satisfy God. But, if it be possible, blinder still are those who have the form of

godliness, whilst they deny the power thereof. Jude speaks of certain characters as "twice dead," and we might reasonably say of unsanctified professors, that they are "twice blind," because they have the eyes of their natural understanding open to see truth in the letter, but the "veil is still upon their heart;" they are still blind towards God, blind to the supernatural manifestation and experimental realisation of the truth as it is in Jesus. If it were not so, if they were not twice blinded, they would have such a sight of themselves as would drive them into madness or despair. If those who are destitute of the fear of God, and yet have the form of godliness, could see themselves as God sees them, playing with mere baubles, amusing their vain minds with speculations, whilst under the wrath of God, under the curse of his law, doomed to eternal perdition,—if they could only have one moment's sight of themselves as God sees them, they would plunge headlong into hell to escape, if it were possible, his vengeful eye. But they are blinded. They cannot see, they do not know where they are. Blindness hath come upon them, and they walking in blindness see not who God is, nor what they are; they see not their real state before God, nor do they know the things that God's people are mysteriously led into. And are not some of you afraid that this is your case? Does not your heart sometimes quake with fear lest you belong to this "rest;" lest the God of this world be blinding you; lest you have nothing but a nominal profession, and lest your conscience be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is good to have such fears. He who feareth not, who has no solemn apprehensions, who has no anxious inquires, who is never exercised with some internal trepidation of soul, it is much to be feared has never known what it is to have "the candle of the Lord searching the hidden parts of the belly." The children of God are often earnestly questioning whether they belong to this band of nominal professors; and their very anxious inquiries, their very searchings of heart, their very appeals to God with fervent importunity, is an evidence that they are not blinded. Those that are blinded by

the god of this world, have no acquaintance with what power and feeling and savour and dew are; they see not these things, they are blind to their reality, they are dead to their importance; but the living family, who are brought by God's blessed Spirit into some apprehension of eternal realities, have eyes to see what power, is, and hearts too, to desire to feel its manifestation. Nay, it is the very seeing what reality and power are, which makes them desire to experience the savour of eternal things in their conscience; and because they do not feel them as they wish, it makes them often fear that they are blind altogether. They are thus brought into that state described, Isa 59:10: "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes." It does not say they had no eyes, but "as if they had no eyes"—that is, they fear that they are the characters; they seem so to stagger here and there like a drunken man, and to be at their wit's end, that they are exercised in their minds whether they are not blind altogether. But the very inquiry, the very anxious cry, the very groaning desire, the very fervent supplication to the Lord that he would not let them live and die without a testimony from himself, that he would lift up the light of his countenance and the life of his favour—these very cries are a proof of life. Were you blind, you would not see these things; were you deaf, you would not spiritually hear these things; were you dead, you would not feel these things. And therefore, that which you seem to take as an evidence against you, is in reality an evidence for you; and the very sensations of trepidation, anxious inquiry, godly tear, and the crying out before the Lord that he would search you and try you, and really make your heart right in his sight—these very things are the symptoms of life, the evidences of a work of grace upon the heart, and are the spiritual breathings of the quickened soul, the Lord himself having communicated these feelings unto it. The blind, hardened, dead, conscience-seared professor has no anxiety, no holy fear, no trembling awe, no godly reverence, no solemn searching before God, whether his heart is right before him; he is shut up in unbelief; he has no inward trepidation of spirit before

God, because his eyes being blind as to who God is, and to what he is before him, all is at peace within him. Like the man spoken of in the parable of the strong man armed, "his goods are at peace;" the strong man keepeth the palace, and as long as the strong man keeps possession, he deadens the conscience, hardens the heart blinds the eyes, and thus represses any conviction that may seem to start up in the natural mind.

If God, then, has quickened your soul into spiritual life, and you have ears to hear, I would just put to you two questions before I conclude. Have you obtained these blessings? Have you obtained righteousness by a manifestation of Christ's righteousness; pardon, by the application of Christ's blood; love, by a shedding abroad of love, deliverance, by a discovery of God's outstretched hand? My other question is this—if you have not, and let conscience bear its honest testimony—if you have never experienced righteousness, pardon, love, and deliverance, is there a cry in your soul after them? Is there anything like fervent supplication that God would bestow them? Is there anything of a groan in the depth of your spirit that the Lord would reveal them? These are marks of life; and he that has these marks will have the blessing, because God has quickened him into spiritual life. It may be long delayed but it will come at last; "it will surely come, it will not tarry." It may be withheld for wise purposes, and you may have to travel through many a dark season and many an anxious hour, but deliverance is sure; it is reserved for you in Christ, and you are reserved for it, kept by God himself unto salvation, ready to be delivered in the last time. I cannot speak to the blind. They have no eyes to see, no ears to hear; no hearts to feel. I speak to the living; for the living alone can receive the testimony of God; and "the living, the living he shall praise him." (Isa. 38:19).

21 THE WAITING EYE AND THE BOUNTEOUS HAND

A Sermon Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, Whitechapel on Thursday

Evening, July 1, 1841

“The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

Psalm 145:15, 16

The Scriptures are a perfect rule of doctrine, experience, and practice. This is a truth which most will admit in words; but what they allow in word they often deny in deed. Men may differ indeed as to the way in which they deny it; for we generally find it depends much on the natural bias of the individual; and that there is a tendency, according to the different constitution of men's minds, either to introduce doctrines which are not in the word of God, or to set up an experience which is not in the Scriptures of truth; or to enforce a line which is not contained in the precepts of the Gospel. Those, for instance, who are heady and high-minded, are fond of setting up some new doctrine, or bringing forward some novel idea, under the pretext of superior light in the Scriptures of truth; those who are of a visionary, and what is termed enthusiastic turn, are desirous of putting forward some wild dream, or airy flight, which is nothing but the fruit of their heated imagination or some delusion of Satan, as genuine experience; and those who have naturally a Pharisaical bias, and are leaning upon a covenant of works, are apt highly to value self-imposed rules of abstinence “Touch not, taste not, handle not”, and to enforce these self-devised rules as equivalent with the precepts of the Gospel. Now no doctrine, no experience, and no practice will stand, except that which is in perfect accordance with the Scriptures of truth; and God will bring all his people, sooner or later to discard every doctrine, which they do not receive of the Spirit through the channel of God's word to look with suspicion upon, and utterly to reject every experience, which is not to be traced out in the Scriptures of truth; and to cast aside, as the working of self-righteous Pharisaic leaven, every ordinance

of man, which is not to be found laid down by the Holy Ghost in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If our experience, then, such as it is, does not tally with the word of God, if it is not to be found in the Scriptures of truth, if it does not coincide and perfectly agree with the experience that God himself has left upon record as a pattern for ours to be conformed to, however high, however low, however wonderful in our own eyes, however marvellous it may appear in the eyes of others, it must all be set aside as delusion, and discarded as erroneous.

But it does not follow, because you cannot see your experience in all points traced out in the word of God, that it is not agreeable to the Scriptures. This often tries the living soul. He has temptations, and those temptations he cannot find in the word of God; and he has exercises, and he cannot see that any Bible saint was exercised in the same manner; and he has feelings, and he can find no feelings akin to them in the Scriptures; and he is tried and perplexed, because he cannot find anything in the word of God, which tallies and fits in with those things that are passing in his own bosom. But at times and seasons the Lord is pleased to cast a light upon some text of Scripture, the meaning of which we never saw before; or he condescends to show us that our temptation is included under general declaration—such, for instance, as “tempted in all points like as we are,” or, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” The Lord opens our eyes to see, whatever have been the exercises of our mind, that there is some passage of Scripture, under which, when the Lord leads us into it, we may hide ourselves; and thus feel, that though the particular exercise is not in the word of God or at least we cannot find it, it is contained in some comprehensive passage of Scripture, which includes that, because it includes all. But as distinct from peculiar exercises and peculiar temptations, there are certain features which are common to the whole family of God, certain feelings which every child of God is more or less acquainted with; and these stand out in more legible characters, in bolder relief, and are more visibly traced out

in the word of God than the others. And therefore, it should be the aim of every minister who desires "rightly to divide the word of truth," to trace out such a way as the generality of God's people walk in, and so to open up the work of grace in the soul, that every living child, when the Spirit of the Lord enables him, may see his features reflected in the mirror which he holds up before them.

I think we find something of this kind in the words of the text. There is nothing very deep here,—so deep that some children of God cannot go into the depths; there is nothing very high here—so that the weak cannot raise up their heads to get at the enjoyment of it; but the experience traced out in these words seems level with the teachings of God's Spirit in the souls of God's family generally, the average experience of a child of God—that which meets most cases, and is suitable to the teachings of the Spirit in most quickened hearts. And therefore from these words, I hope, with God's blessing, to point out a little of the feelings of a living soul this evening.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing."

1. We find the word "all," and the word "every," used in the text: "the eyes of all wait upon thee,"—"the desire of every living thing." That word, then, "all" must include every quickened soul, the expression "every living thing" must comprehend every one that is under divine teaching; for though the words have no doubt a literal signification, expressive of the universality of God's providence and implying that the whole animate creation are looking up unto God for the daily provision that he gives unto them, yet they are doubtless to be explained in a far higher sense, and to be interpreted in a spiritual manner, so as to describe the effect of the teachings of God's Spirit in the soul. "The eyes of all wait upon thee:" all the living family, all the quickened children of God, all in whose hearts he has planted his fear, all whom he has brought to some knowledge of him, and to some knowledge of themselves.

2. These are said to have “eyes.” “The eyes of all wait upon thee.” Clearly, then, they are not dead in sin; clearly they are not dead in a form of godliness. They have “eyes,” that is, they have a spiritual faculty, whereby they can see God. They are not buried in the grave of death; but possess a new and hidden life, whereby they are enabled to realize the things of God, they are made known to them by the Spirit of God. The expression, “The eyes of all wait upon thee,” implies that these persons who thus wait upon God must have eyes whereby they see him, for had they no eyes to see him, they would not know where to wait upon him, they would not know where he was to be found, they would not know what it was that they were to receive from his hands. It implies, therefore, in the persons of whom it is spoken, that they have a spiritual knowledge of Jehovah; that the veil has been taken from off their carnal minds, and they have seen light in God’s light; that the Lord has in a measure manifested himself unto them as he has not manifested himself to the world; that he has opened their eyes, “and turned them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” and thus has given to them eyes to see him, whom to know “is life eternal.” And not merely opened their eyes to see him, but opened their hearts to feel his presence, to recognise his power, and to fall down before his footstool.

3. For the posture assigned to them is one of “waiting:” “The eyes of all wait upon thee.” No arrogant confidence, no rushing forward with daring boldness as though they would snatch the blessing from God, whether he means to give it or not—no standing upon the lofty mountains of presumption, those mountains of Gilboa where there is “no dew nor rain,” do these words sanction; but the posture intimated in them is that of a suppliant, of a petitioner, of one who has a favour to receive, and has nothing in himself, which he can put forward, to draw forth that favour out of the bosom of Him who alone can bestow it. But the expression also implies, that the blessing is not communicated just when the suppliants want to have it, but that there is a time allotted for that

blessing to be given. The way in which the Lord acts upon the souls of his children, is to raise up first a deep sense of their poverty, emptiness, destitution, and beggary and then to set before their eyes those blessings which are precisely suitable to that state into a which he brings them. And this he does by enlightening the eyes of their understanding, whereby they see certain blessings, revealed in the word of God as stored up in Christ. As the Lord presents these blessings before their eyes, He kindles certain desires, and longings, and thirstings and pantings, after them, that they may be individually realized, personally enjoyed, and spiritually and supernaturally manifested. I believe, that the Lord, before ever he communicate, a real blessing to the souls of his poor and needy children, not merely convinces them by his Spirit of the depth of their poverty, of their truly ruined and lost state by nature, of the destitution of everything good in them; but he opens their eyes in a mysterious manner to see certain blessings which are stored up in Christ,—for instance, righteousness to cover their nakedness, blood to atone for their transgressions, grace to superabound over all the aboundings of sin, faith to be the evidence of things not seen, hope to anchor within the veil, and love to be a foretaste of eternal bliss. These and similar blessings the Lord presents before their eyes, and gives them a spiritual understanding that these mercies are stored up in Christ; and as he gives them this perception of what the blessing is, and shows them that these blessings are not in the creature, but in Christ, by the mysterious attractions of his

Spirit he draws forth the desires and sighs and ardent affections of their souls after these blessings, so that nothing but these special mercies can really satisfy them, ease their minds, assuage their troubles, bind up their wounds, and pour oil and wine into their consciences. And thus he brings them to be suppliants; he lays them at his feet as beggars. He will not allow any one to come into his presence, who rushes forward with bold presumption and daring familiarity. He will not suffer his children to make any claim upon him, as if they had a right to the blessings that are in Christ;

but he brings them, as the vilest of the vile, and the basest of the base, and the neediest of the needy, into that posture, wherein they feel that there is not in their hearts a grain of that which they long to experience, not an atom of that which they want to enjoy, and that they have nothing in themselves whereby they can merit or draw down that favour from God's hands, which they long to receive. And yet, base though they feel themselves to be, black though they know that they are, there is that mysterious attraction of the Spirit, as well as that mysterious fitting together of their poverty and Christ's righteousness, their nakedness and Christ's justifying robe, their helplessness and his almighty strength, that they never can be satisfied, unless an experienced and enjoyed union of the two takes place in their conscience. Thus the Lord makes them "wait upon him;" "the eyes of all wait upon thee." The Lord makes them "wait upon him with many sighs and groans, with many fervent petitions, with many wrestlings of spirit before the throne of grace."

But the object of the Lord is to keep them there. He does not bring his poor and needy children to a throne of grace, and send them away immediately that they have come. But his purpose is, to show them deeply what they are, to make them value his favours, to sink them lower and lower in self, that they may rise higher and higher in Christ, to "teach them to profit" as the Scripture speaks, to write his laws upon their hearts in lines of the Spirit's drawing, in deep lines, "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever;" not characters traced out in the sand, to be washed out by the rising tide, or effaced by the wind, but in characters as permanent as the soul itself. The work of the Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed, is radical work, work that goes to the very bottom; nothing flimsy, nothing superficial, nothing which can be effaced and obliterated springs from Him, but that which shall have an abiding effect, that which shall last for eternity. The Lord is fitting his people for eternity, and therefore his work in them is thorough work; it goes right through them; it leaves nothing covered up and masked over, but turns all up from the very bottom, "discovering the foundation to

the neck" Hab 3:13, and doing in a man spiritually what the Lord threatened to do in Jerusalem literally, "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down" 2Ki 21:13. Therefore he does not answer the prayers of his children immediately when they come to his throne of mercy and grace, but rather he deepens those convictions that he has implanted; he makes the burdens heavier, that he has put upon their back; he hides himself instead of discovering himself, and draws back further instead of coming nearer. Now, this is intended to make them wait with greater earnestness, with more unreserved simplicity, with more absolute dependence upon him and him alone to communicate the blessing, with greater separation of heart from all the strength of the creature, with a firmer resolution in the soul to cast away all its own righteousness, and to hang solely and wholly upon the Spirit's teachings, and Jesus' sweet revelation of himself.

But there are many difficulties and exercises, that attend the soul when it is in this waiting posture. Sometimes the length of season before the Lord manifests himself, daunts and baffles the living soul, that is sighing after Gospel blessings. He reasons thus with himself: "Surely if I were a child of God, I should have had the blessing sooner; my prayers cannot be acceptable in his eyes; I must be a hypocrite; I fear I have only the feelings of one, who has a conscience in some measure naturally more susceptible of impressions than others; but not one which has been spiritually touched with the finger of God. It cannot be a real work of the Spirit, for I find others have been delivered before me; I know several who have received deliverances, and manifestations, and here I am, as poor and needy and naked and empty, as the very first day I came." Satan, too, will often set in upon the soul when it is in this posture, and say, "It is all true; the work never was real; the fear of God never was in your soul; if it had been, you would not have been entangled in such and such sins. See what a base wretch you were on that occasion; recollect how you have backslidden from God on the other occasion; is it not evident that you are a hypocrite?"

Under these accusations, which so dovetail in with conscience, the soul is ready to sink into despair. But the Lord makes use of these very buffetings of Satan, and these sore exercises of the soul, to bring about his own intentions; that is, he implants a sigh and a cry, that we may not be hypocrites, that there may be reality in us, that he would make our hearts all that he would have them to be, and would himself work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, would give us that simplicity of heart and tenderness of conscience and godly fear, which are his own divine workmanship. And thus the Lord often baffles Satan, and as it were outwits him by the very things which Satan employs to harass and distress the soul. The Lord will keep the soul "waiting" upon him. Sometimes these sore exercises and temptations are made the means of driving us nearer to the throne. Sometimes the Lord himself bestows a "spirit of grace and of supplications;" and that enables us to wrestle more fervently with him. Sometimes he lays upon the conscience pangs and convictions of distress; and that makes the soul cry more earnestly for the blessing. And sometimes he draws forth the unutterable desires and affections of the renewed spirit after the blessing, and after himself who gives the blessing; as though nothing else would satisfy the soul but he must come, and come immediately,—he must bless, and bless immediately—he must even now reveal himself to the soul, and fill it with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Again: the Lord keeps the soul waiting upon him, sometimes by allowing us a little to depart; by suffering us to go to the utmost length of the tether, and then making us feel the bitterness of departing from him. He allows us, in his secret and mysterious purposes, to get into a carnal, dark, stupid, careless, unfeeling frame; he allows us to backslide inwardly from him, and to depart in heart and affection from the fountain of living waters; and then he takes occasion from this very inward departure to bring troubles into the soul, that "the backslider in heart may be filled with his own ways." He makes use of this very truant-playing to inflict

chastisement; and the very means that Satan has been employing to drive the soul from him, he uses as means to bring the soul near unto him. By dark and trying ways, too, in providence does the Lord sometimes teach his people to wait upon him. They shall often be beggars for their daily bread literally, as well as spiritually, and their eyes shall wait upon the Lord for every supply in temporals as much as in spirituals. But whether so or not, the Lord will take care that all his children, without exception, shall be beggars in spiritual things. Now, this often much tries their minds. We are for being independent in grace, as we are for being independent in providence. It is a mortifying position to be always a beggar; that a man should never have any strength of his own—that he should never have any store in hand—that he should never have any power to draw upon the bank—that he should be always a poor, needy, naked, helpless wretch—that he should never have anything, upon which he can look with satisfaction, and say, “It is mine;” but, day after day, be dependent upon the Lord for every prayer to put up, for every sigh, for every groan, for every promise, for every chapter of the Bible, for everything to be given to him, just as the Lord sees fit, from time to time—this dependent position so mortifies man’s pride, and so baffles his reason, that he cannot, and will not submit to it, until God brings him to it by soul necessity. And, therefore, some of God’s children, upon whom he does not see fit to keep a tight hand, break the tether; and instead of being poor, needy, dependent, broken-hearted suppliants at the foot of the cross, like the wild ass they “snuff up the wind at their pleasure” Jer 2:24, taking “the range of the mountains as their pasture, and searching after every green thing” Job 39:8. Or, they encircle themselves within the doctrines of grace, and rest at ease within these entrenchments, standing in their own strength, and resting upon the letter of truth, without any feeling application or savoury unction of it in their souls.

But the Lord will bring all his children, sooner or later, each in their measure, to “wait upon him.” Whatever trouble they are in,

“the eyes of all wait upon thee;” whatever temptations they have to pass through, “the eyes of all wait upon thee” whatever difficulty in temporal things, whatever conflict in spiritual things whatever strait in providence, whatever exercise in grace be their lot the Lord will bring all his children at one time or another into this experience, “the eyes of all wait upon thee.” “Wait upon thee” for deliverance; “wait upon thee” for a manifestation; “wait upon thee” for the lifting up the light of thy countenance; “wait upon thee” for one soft word spoken by thy mouth to the soul; “wait upon thee” for one smile of thine approving countenance; “wait upon thee” for one testimony of thine everlasting favour. And he that knows not what it is to wait upon God in this manner—wait upon him by night and by day as the Lord works it in him, wait upon him on his bed, wait upon him behind his counter, wait upon him in the solitary fields, wait upon him in the crowded streets—he lacks that evidence, he wants that divine feature, which the Holy Ghost has stamped here upon all the living family.

4. “And thou givest them their meat in due season.” There is “meat,” then, that they are waiting upon God for, to receive at his hands. And it is called “their meat.” It belongs to them. All the elect of God have provision laid up for them in Christ; for “it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” “I will abundantly bless her provision” Ps 132:15. Though none of God’s quickened family ever dare to claim the blessing at God’s hands, yet the Lord has so stored up blessings in Christ, that they are actually and eternally theirs; for, as the apostle says, “all things are yours.” It is their meat then; that is the meat peculiar to the elect. Blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only; righteousness brought in for them, and for them only; love bestowed upon them, and upon them only; promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only; an eternal inheritance, “incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them,” and for them only. It is “their meat,” because it is theirs in Christ, being lodged in Christ for their benefit. But it is theirs

in another sense; and that is, they are the only people who hunger after it, who have an appetite for it, who have a mouth to feed upon it, who have a stomach to digest it. They are the only people whose eyes are really open to see what "meat" is. Others feed upon shadows; they know nothing of the savoury food of the Gospel. As the Lord said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." His meat was the hidden communications of God's love, the visitations of his Father's presence, the divine communion that he enjoyed with his Father while the disciples were gone away, "to do the will of him that sent him and to finish his work." So, for the children of God, there is meat in Christ; and this meat the Lord gives them a hunger after. He not only sets before their eyes what the meat is but he kindles inexpressible longings in their soul to be fed therewith. God's people cannot feed upon husks, nor upon ashes, nor upon chaff, nor upon the east wind, nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah De 32:32. They must have "meat" "savoury meat, such as their soul loveth"—that which God himself communicates, and which his hand alone can bring down, and give unto them, so that they may receive it from him as their soul-satisfying portion.

The "meat" which God's children long after, is to have "the truth as it is in Jesus" in its various branches, revealed with power to their heart. Not merely to see a certain truth in God's word; that is, like a hungry beggar, looking at savoury provision through a window, from which he is barred out: such a sight whets his appetite rather than satisfies it. The meat that God's people are longing after and the only thing which can assuage their spiritual hunger, is "the truth as it is in Jesus" manifested, revealed, discovered, and applied with power to their souls: dew, unction, savour, sweetness, life, light, liberty accompanying the word so that truth falls as heavenly manna into their hearts. It is not sufficient that the Holy Ghost should create the appetite, but he must overshadow the soul with his divine influences, breathe abroad a heavenly savour, and fill it with some sensations of his presence, with some meltings of heart

at the feet of Christ, with some drawing forth of affection to God; and thus communicate an inward reception of the truth, and an enjoyment of its sweetness and savour. A child of God never can be deceived long together. He may get under presumptuous ministers, drink for a while into their spirit, and feed his fleshly mind at their table; but there is a something in his heart that keeps him from being satisfied with their light and airy food. He may store his head with knowledge and doctrines, but still there is a voice in him, an honest irrepressible tongue which bears from time to time a solemn testimony that he is not in a right spot, that he is not living under heavenly teaching, that he has no sweet communion of soul with the Three-one Jehovah; but that he is lifted up out of his real standing in the divine life, and that his knowledge is but a shadowy dream, confused, indistinct, vague, destitute of vitality and power. And though he may struggle against such a self-condemning monitor, he still, in spite of himself, carries in his bosom an internal evidence, a testimony not to be denied, a witness which will make itself heard, that he is not living under the anointings of the Holy Ghost, and that the Heavenly Comforter does not put his seal upon his religion. I believe, there are children of God, who sit under presumptuous ministers; but God will never let them live and die in resumption. He will bring them out sooner or later; he will cut them up with piercing convictions, and lay them at the feet of Christ, hating themselves as the vilest of transgressors, for being drawn aside into that worst of sins. Oh! when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, it will make a living conscience bleed; it will cut a man with such convictions, that he will hardly know how to stand before God. If anything can sink a living soul except it is being ensnared by the flesh, it is being entangled in presumption, intruding into the things of God, without the Lord the Spirit leading him into them. The Lord's people are seeking after meat; but that meat is never given to one in presumption; it is never given but to a poor broken-down and contrite sinner. The Lord never bestowed meat

upon a self-satisfied soul; he never gave a broken-hearted Christ to a whole-hearted sinner; he never sprinkled atoning blood on a reckless conscience. The Lord never throws away his blessings. He bestows them upon a heart which he has prepared to receive them,—a heart made soft, tender, and contrite, so as to feel itself utterly unworthy of the blessing, and yet unable to take anything short of it, dissatisfied with everything else, and yet feeling itself unworthy of one glimpse of love or one token of favour. Still it is “their meat;” and nothing but that meat ever will satisfy them.

5. “Thou givest them.” It is not to be taken out of the Bible, because it may be read; not to be caught up, as the minister throws it forth, because it may be heard; not to be got out of books; but to be bestowed by the holy hand of Jehovah himself, and received in the posture of a penitent, in the attitude of a suppliant, a sinner prostrate at the foot of the cross, without anything in self but wounds, condemnation, and guilt.

6. But there is a due season: “Thou givest them their meat in due season.” There are many living souls, who are hungering after divine blessings, but the “due season” has not come. “The times and the seasons the Father hath put in his own power.” You are not yet fit for it; the Lord has to bring you lower; you will have to travel through darker paths, to pass through sorer exercises.—There is a “due season” for the manifestation of Gospel blessings; there is a fitting time, which the Searcher of hearts knows. And that Searcher of hearts knows that many of the true Church of God are at this present time in that state, that he will not manifest to them his greatest and richest blessings. There is a “due season,” in which they are revealed and manifested to the soul; and that season will be as suitable to all its wants, as it will be most glorious to God. That “due season” will most probably be when the soul will least expect to receive it. The promise having been so long delayed, it seems as though it would never come; the blessing having been so long withheld, it appears as though the Lord would never bestow it; having denied his countenance so long, it seems as though he

had drawn a black cloud over the throne, and through that cloud the rays of the sun would never shine. But it is a "due season;" it will surely come; "though the vision tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." There is a "set time to favour Zion," and when that set time arrives, the Lord will build up Zion and appear in his glory, for he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer Ps 102:16,17.

7. "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." There is something very sweet in this expression, "Thou openest thine hand;" implying that the Lord holds the blessing in his own hand, and that it is the opening of the hand, the unclosing of the heavenly palm, whereby the blessing is communicated. I have thought sometimes from the words, that there is some intimation of the way in which the Lord communicates his blessings. It is something like an earthly father, when he comes home at night. Perhaps he has purchased something for his child, some toy or sweetmeat, during the day, which he holds in his hand, and just opens it for a few moments, and lets the child see what he has brought him; this is to kindle the desire of the child after the thing which the father intends him to have. But no sooner has the father opened his hand for a few moments, than he closes it again, in order to whet still more the desire of the child, and make it run to him, to try to obtain possession of it. So, the heavenly Father often for a moment uncloses his hand, displays the blessing before the eyes of his children, holds forth the atonement, and discovers the beauty, the grace, the loveliness of Jesus; and as he for a few moments opens his hand, he kindles all the burning desires and breathing affections of the soul after the blessing. The living child then runs to the Father to procure it; but the hand is closed, the blessing is withheld. But to pursue our comparison, the child, having once seen what is in the father's hand, knows that it is there, and its object is to get possession of it; and therefore it will try to thrust its tiny finger into the father's palm, and thus force it open. Does not this resemble the child of

God, who when he has seen the blessings that God holds in his hands, and the affections of his heart are kindled after those blessings, seeks by fervent prayer and earnest cries and holy wrestlings to prevail upon the Lord to give him possession of that blessing which he longs to obtain? Do I speak irreverently or unscripturally when I say that thus to seek the blessing is to thrust our finger into the closed palm of the Lord, and endeavour to force it open? for “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” “Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. But as the child seeks to uncloset its earthly parent’s hand, the father will often hold it tighter; and so when a living soul is seeking to get a blessing from the Lord, it often seems as though the hand of the Lord was clasped more firmly than before. But after a time the earthly parent suffers the little fingers of the child to prevail. What is the child’s strength against the father’s? But he is overcome by love; it was always his intention that the child should have the blessing, and his purpose was to give it in that way; and therefore he suffers his strong hand to be overcome by the tiny finger of a little child; he unlocks his fingers, unclasps his palm and lets his child draw out the blessing. So it is spiritually with the family of God. He suffers himself to be prevailed upon; he unclasps his fingers and unlocks his palm, and so gives that blessing which he always meant to bestow. This seems clearly set forth in Jacob’s wrestling with the angel. There was a blessing which the Lord always meant to give him—that Esau should not prevail against him, but was to wrestle for it. He must put forth his human hands and wrestle with the Lord and the Lord himself, the God of all power and might, allowed himself to be overcome, suffered himself to be prevailed upon, permitted weak lame Jacob to “have power with God and prevail,” to show that our weakness is no barrier against our receiving blessings, for the Lord suffers our weakness to prevail over his strength. Then he “opens his hand,” and not only displays the blessing, but allows the hand of faith to grasp the blessing, strengthens the hand of faith to lay

hold upon Jesus' righteousness, the eye of faith to look upon Jesus' beauty, and the ear of faith to hear his voice and live."

8. "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing." That word has been sweet to me sometimes—"every living thing!"

How comprehensive it is! And how low it descends! How it comes down to the weakest and meanest and least of God's family, if he is only "a thing" only "a living thing!"—if he cannot see himself "a man in Christ,"—no, nor see himself a child of God, no, nor see himself a new born babe! If he cannot see in himself the features of a child even, yet to be "a living thing!" As one said of old, "I am a worm, and no man." He could not rise to the dignity of a man—a man "in Christ;" no, he was "a worm." So here; even to be "a thing" "a living thing," such a "creeping thing" as was seen among the unclean beasts in the sheet let down from heaven by the four corners in Peter's vision, with this mark upon it, and no other, life; for the words to him were, "kill and eat" implying life in all the contents of the sheet. Or like the early foetus in the womb, possessed of life but no distinct features visible, no limbs apparent, no human form, no human face; only a shapeless thing; but still having life. Now, perhaps, if you cannot trace the features of a grown up man as stamped upon you, and are exercised with distressing doubts whether your experience even amounts to the newborn babe, you may yet come in here, as being "a living thing," a nondescript; a sort of person that cannot make yourself out, having an experience which you think nobody can fathom, having exercises which nobody else seems to be harassed with, and walking in a path where no other child of God seems ever to have walked before you. Did not one say of old, and have not you and I echoed his words? "a beast before thee;" not a man, for "surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man" Pr 30:2; but possessed of life still, breathing after God still, with that in the soul which cannot rest satisfied short of the manifestation and the presence of God.

But here is the mark of the “living thing”—the desire; “Thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” Not natural desires; not “the desire of the sluggard, which hath nothing” Pr 13:4, that is, nothing spiritual in the want, or in the answer; but the spiritual desires which the Holy Ghost himself has kindled, desires after God, “as the hart panteth after the water brooks,” desires to know Christ by some sweet revelation of his glory, desires to be brought to the foot of the cross and to have his image stamped upon our soul, desires to be led into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his which passeth knowledge, desires to walk before God accepted in the Beloved, desires to feel that in our souls which shall sweetly satisfy us that we are eternally His. This “living thing,” though a nondescript in his own feelings, has that which marks the existence of life in him; and that is, living desires towards the living God,—breathing affections after Jesus, a restless dissatisfied heart, discontented with the things of time and sense, feeling no pleasure in what the world presents, and sighing to the Lord for the discoveries of his grace and his love.

“Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” Every child of God, then, that has spiritual life, every one who is really seeking the Lord, through the Blessed Spirit’s working in him, every “living thing” that is possessed of living desires towards Jehovah, “Thou satisfieth.” Here is the mark of having spiritual desires,—that they cannot be satisfied without God. Many a person will say, “I have desires,” but what are those desires? Are they a lingering and thirsting after righteousness? Are they a panting after God’s favour? Are they a solemn cry in the soul after the manifestations of Christ’s love? And do they issue in satisfaction? “Thou satisfiest the desires of every living thing.” There will be a “satisfaction” when the desire is granted. “The desire of the slothful killeth him” Pr 21:25, for it never issues in eternal life; but when “the desire of the righteous cometh, it is a tree of life,” which yields new fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This, then, is to be the path that the Lord leads his children in. He convinces them of their misery and guilt; he opens their eyes to see Jesus; he kindles in their hearts desires after him; he brings them to wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob and to look for him; he shows them his hand full of blessings; he allows himself to be prevailed upon, through their intercession at his throne, to open his band, when the due season comes, to give them their meat, and to satisfy their desires. And now, I think, I have gone as low as is consistent with the Scriptures of truth. If there be any soul, in this chapel, exercised as I have described, and the Lord should please to bless what has been spoken by my feeble lips, it will take in every child of God, in whose heart God has planted his fear; it will comprehend every one, whose eyes are upon the Lord, expecting and hoping to receive blessings at his hands.

22 SERVANTS AND SONS

Preached , at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street
on Lord's Day Morning,
July 4, 1841

*"And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but
the son abideth ever."*

John 8:35

No circumstances can arise in the visible church of God, for which there is not a provision already made in the Scriptures of truth; no heresy can spring up, for which there is not some effectual antidote: no error can come abroad in the face of day, for which there is not there some adequate remedy; no character can arise, whose features have not been there traced out; no delusion, stratagem, or deceit of Satan can start up, which is not to be found already exposed and condemned in the word of God. Not that these things are to be found on the surface, not that they are visible to ordinary observers, but they are hidden in the depths of God's

word a part of those secrets which are with them that fear the Lord. It requires, indeed, Divine illumination to see, and Divine inspiration to feel and understand, truth as opposed to all such errors. And, generally speaking, we find, when any new doctrine arises in the visible Church of Christ, or any plausible error which opposes the truth of God, or is calculated to binder the growth of saints, or in any way to tarnish the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord raises up some one or more instruments in his hands, whom he enlightens into an acquaintance with the truth, and whom he enables to testify as faithful witnesses and iron pillars against that error, whatever it may be. And such stand up, clothed in the armour of God, taught of the Holy Ghost, and bringing forth out of the word of God those weapons of warfare which are made instrumental in pulling down error and building up truth. I would fain hope that I see raised up in different places faithful witnesses who are boldly testifying against the death that prevails in the Calvinistic churches, and contending for the power of vital godliness.

But I proceed to consider the words that now lie before me.

The text from which I hope, with God's blessing, to speak a few words this morning, is pregnant with heavenly truth. It aptly describes the state of the Church of God in the days in which we live. It is a bright mirror, in which the features of the visible Church of God are now reflected, and, doubtless, have been similarly reflected in all ages since Christ set up his Church upon earth. It will be, therefore, my business, with God's blessing, this morning, to bring out of this text, as far as the Lord has been pleased to lead me into it, such instruction as he may condescend to bless to your soul? "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever."

Our translators do not seem to me to have understood the meaning of the text, for they have written the word "son" with a capital letter, as though it meant Christ, the Son of God, whereas it means a son in a house generally, as opposed to a servant.

The Lord brings this forward as a comparison, a metaphor, an

illustration, and then leaves it. He did not then vouchsafe to interpret his meaning. He left it to be explained by the Spirit, in the epistles of his inspired apostles. He merely threw out a truth, and left it without further explanation. And that this is the meaning of the words, I shall endeavour to show from other parts of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

In the Scriptures of the New Testament, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." Now, I believe, the Scriptures of the New Testament never, in any one instance, mean, by "the house of God," any material building. It has come to pass, through the tradition received from the fathers, that buildings erected by man, collections of bricks and mortar, piles of squared and cemented stones, are often called "the house of God." In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of God's house, thus endeavouring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that he was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies. The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the National Establishment; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God." And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God." How frequently does the expression drop from the dissenting pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer-meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God. It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for his ser-

vice. The ancient temple was indeed “the house of God,” for it was typical of Jesus. God did indeed manifest his presence and glory there, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament continually call it by that name. “I was glad,” says David, “when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Ps. 122:1). “I went with them to the house of God” (Ps. 42:4). “This house,” says Solomon, “which is called by thy name” (2 Chron. 6:33). The ark of the covenant, the brazen altar, the table of the shew-bread, the altar of incense, with all the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, were typical of Jesus, in whom it hath pleased the father that all fullness should dwell. Christ is indeed the true “house of God,” for “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” and he is the true temple, of which Solomon’s was but the figure and type, according to the Lord’s own words, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). No modern building, then, can ever rise to the dignity, or I claim the title of that ancient temple, because the substance having come, the shadows have passed away. The holiness of the old temple was typical of Christ, as “sanctified by the Father” (John 10:36); and holiness has never been connected with any building since the Lord of the house has appeared upon earth, and is again ascended up where he was before. But the expression, “the house of God,” bears in the New Testament several different meanings. It signifies, first, “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven,” the spouse of Christ, the redeemed from among men, the mystical body of Jesus. It is used in this sense, Heb. 10:21, “Having a high priest over the house of God;” and again, “Christ, as a Son over his own house” (Heb. 3:6). But it signifies also a Church of God, an assembly of saints, which is formed on Gospel principles; a Gospel church, as consisting of living members of Christ’s body; and thus we find the Apostle Paul instructing Timothy “how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). So again, “Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope

firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). And again, "Ye also, as lively or "living" stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5).

But there is a third meaning of the words, according to which they signify a visible church, one in which there are sheep and goats, wheat and tares, living souls and dead professors, vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath; as Paul speaks "but in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (2 Tim. 2:20). With respect to the meaning of the word "house" in the text, I believe it means a visible Church of Christ; not the "general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven," not that glorious church which Jesus has purchased with his own blood, and clothed with his own righteousness. Nor does it mean a pure Gospel church, one of which all the members are living souls, if indeed such a church ever existed; but I believe it means a visible church of Christ, such a one as is spoken of in the text above quoted, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth." The same as is intended in that passage, "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17), that is, the professing church below.

We read in the text of two characters inhabiting this house. "And the Servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever."

I. There are two characters, then, spoken of as dwelling in the house of God,—the servant and the son; and the lot and appointed portion of each is declared by the mouth of Truth itself: "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever." We shall see, as we proceed, that there are really three characters that dwell in this house,—servants, sons in their minority, and sons arrived at manhood. But taking the broad line of distinction, which is established in our text, the dwellers in this house on earth, in this visible church, may be divided into two—servants and sons. We cannot have a more familiar comparison than this. It is one with which all that have a family, and can afford to keep a servant,

are conversant. In every such household there is always a marked line of distinction drawn between the members of the family and the servants who wait upon them; and no attempt on either side can ever change the servant into a son, or the son into a servant. The sons and daughters may often, from necessity, perform the menial offices of a servant; but this does not deprive them of their birthright and original character. They may do all that a servant does, but their undertaking these menial offices does not alter the position in which they stand with respect to their parents; nor, on the other hand, can any acts of kindness, any acts of domestic intercourse, any inviting the servant to sit at the family board, at all do away with, or alter the real standing and position of the servant. He is a servant still, merely made use of for a time to do those offices which he has contracted to perform, and no kindness nor intimacy on the part of the family can ever do away with that original distinction—that he is a servant, and not a son. Thus, then, it is with the visible Church of Christ. There are in that church, servants, who never, by any process, can be made sons, and there are sons, who never, by any process, can be made servants. “The servant may ride on horses,” as we read, (Eccl. 10:7), “and the princes the sons of the King of kings may walk as servants upon the earth:” but there is no changing their original position, there is no destroying their real standing, no overthrowing their intrinsic and eternal difference. By a church, I understand a church that professes truth; no other deserves the name. The Establishment is not worthy the name of a church, and if ever I call it so, it is from the mere force of habit; nor do I allow an Arminian Church to be a visible Church of Christ; its name is “a congregation of the dead,” that is the title which the Scripture has stamped upon it (Prov. 21:16). The real house of God is “the pillar and ground of the truth;” and therefore, if a church so called does not hold the doctrines of grace, it is not worthy the name of a church. In the remarks, then, that I shall drop this morning on a church—I understand by the term a visible Church of Christ, a church that professes truth, that stands upon Gospel

principles, and bears Scriptural marks of being a Church of God. In these churches, then, such as yours, to which I am now addressing myself, there will always be not only sons, but servants, whom God, for wise purposes, has seen fit to employ in the performance of such offices as cannot be done without them. Mark, I do not say that God introduces them, but he suffers them to be introduced. Their coming in was their own act and deed, for which they must be responsible—a fruit of that presumption of which their hearts are full. But being in, and that according to Divine appointment, God makes use of them as servants for the family. For instance, in a visible church, there are often persons of wealth, substance, and property, who seem employed by God to keep things together. You will scarcely find any church in which there are not members who have some substance or worldly property, and the Lord makes use of them as instruments to support the cause, and do that which it requires silver and gold to do. Not that the poor members of a church are to look with envious and suspicious eyes upon those who are favoured with worldly substance, and make their money an evidence against them, if they bear marks of grace; for the Lord, who is no respecter of persons, though he will not have many such among his people, has doubtless some; and thus the poor members of churches have no more right to take a man's worldly substance as an evidence against him, than they are warranted to take their temporal poverty as an evidence for themselves. "Let the brother of low degree," says James (James 1:9, 10), "rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low;" clearly implying that they were both gracious characters.

Others of these servants may be useful in visiting and relieving poorer members, receiving the ministers, and filling offices. Some may have gifts in prayer, and understanding the Scriptures, and, to use a common term, may "make themselves generally useful." But whatever situation or position they may occupy, they will still have in their minds all the feelings of a servant. Let a servant be invited to sit at the family board, he never sits there as a child; there is a re-

strait, an unpleasant feeling working in his mind, an edging away from the table, a sense of confusion, as if he were out of his place, a conviction that he ought not to be there. And thus, though he sits with the children and partakers of the children's food, yet there is working in his bosom an unwillingness to be there; he would rather be in the kitchen, would rather sit in his own corner, and not be at the table to which he is promoted. So it is with those servants in visible churches, who have nothing of "the Spirit of adoption" in their bosoms, who have no tenderness of filial feeling towards God, who cannot approach with spiritual access to him, so as to feel anything like the working of a child towards a father. In all their approaches to God, and in all their sitting together with the family, there is a bondage and a constraint; when they partake of the bread. It is with servile fear; when they drink the wine, there is no partaking by faith of the Saviour's blood; but guilt and bondage chain them down with heavy fetters. And however they may talk of liberty, however they may boast themselves in a presumptuous confidence, however they may enthrone themselves among the princes of God's people, yet, with it all, there is a servile spirit; there is nothing like spiritual freedom in their hearts, no liberty nor enlargement in their souls; no filial access to God, but all is a piece of wretched lip-service, bodily exercise, and slavish toil, which is done to pacify the natural conscience, but which is not the real feeling of a child towards a father.

But some of these servants, through the base pride of their hearts, shall exercise authority, when they can, over the children of the living God. It happens in families sometimes, when the children are young, that the servants, behind the parents' back, shall show them cruelty. The servant, grudging, as it were, the privileges of the children, feels a kind of base delight in tormenting those who are his superiors in station. His wretched servile heart rises up with envy against the embraces that a child receives from his parent; and knowing the day will come when the child now under him shall rise above him, in order to gratify his mortified feelings,

he will often tease, and show unkindness towards the child, who, for a time, is under his care. I do not mean to say that this is a common case, but still there are frequent instances of it. Thus there is in servants that are in visible churches, who have a Gospel tongue and a legal heart, have a servile enmity, a base, illiberal, grudging spirit against the real children of God. Their eyes are quick to see that sons have feelings different from servants. They mark in them contrition, reverence, godly fear, simplicity, tenderness, brokenness of heart, very different from the proud presumption that works in their minds, very different from that seared crust of a hardened conscience under which their servile spirit throbs and festers; and therefore, being provoked at seeing, in the living family, marks which they find not in themselves, they are glad to ride over their heads in the chariot of presumption. And if they find, as they continually do find, any of the living family in bondage, trouble, and distress of mind, they delight to cuff and beat them, to take down the parents' rod, which the servant is strictly forbidden to use, and flog them for their doubts and fears, and their very tears of affection at their parents' absence. Sometimes these servants shall get into a pulpit, and instead of feeling any love or affection for the family, instead of sympathising with the sons and daughters of that Parent of whom they presumptuously claim to be children, all their aim and delight is to trample down and shoot their bitter arrows against every feeling of tenderness, contrition, and godly fear, every symptom of meekness, simplicity, and uprightness in the children, and to harden their fellow-slaves in presumptuous confidence, in enjoying what I may call the slave's holiday, the liberty of the negro in the absence of the overseer, not the sweet, savoury, chastened liberty that the "Spirit of adoption" communicates to a child of God. Watch them with a keen eye, and wherever you see preachers building up professors in vain confidence, and wounding and distressing broken hearts and contrite spirits, trampling under their proud feet the groaning living family of Zion, depend upon it they are servants, and not sons, walking

in a vain show, thrust by the devil, their father, into the pulpit, to torment and harass the souls of God's family. But the servant will always carry about with him the mark of a servant. Let a footman doff his livery and put on his master's clothes, he is a footman still; there are his clumsy hands and his gawky figure; he has not the air of his master; he is not at home in his new dress; you discern him at once under his master's garb. And so let the servants in the visible churches deck themselves in the dress of the family, they are servants still; their "voice is the voice of Jacob, but their hands are the hands of Esau;" they may talk of humility, but it is only the pride which apes it; they may speak of liberty, but their faces bear the stamp of bondage; they may boast of God as their Father, but their very countenances mark that they know him not in any other way than as a Master and a Judge. Therefore, watch them in every state. Some of them are under convictions—I mean natural convictions; they are servants still. Some are walking in vain confidence; they are servants too. Mark them in every state—watch them in every position; servitude is stamped upon them. There is nothing of the features of the child—there is nothing but that which a servant is, and that which a servant ever will be.

"And the servant abideth not in the house for ever." It is needful for him to be for a while in the house. As I was passing a church so-called this morning, I could not but look at the scaffolding reared up to the top of the steeple. A thought crossed my mind. The scaffolding will be taken down—the building will stand—but the scaffolding will be removed; and when the poles become rotten, they will be cast into the fire. So there must be a scaffolding for God's visible church; and when the church is built up in its fair proportions, and the top-stone put on with shoutings, "grace, grace unto it," the scaffolding will be pulled down and cast into the fire. So these "servants abide not in the house for ever." They must do their work—they must perform those menial offices which are necessary for the family—but their time will come to depart: they "abide not in the house for ever."

In a family, a servant may be a very useful person, almost indispensable to the comfort of the master and the mistress. They shall, for this reason, bear for a long time with his fretful humours, and shall endure many things from him which much try their patience: but there is a limit to all forbearance: the time at last comes when the master or mistress can no longer put up with that insolence which they have endured so long. The servant is summoned into the master's presence, his wages are paid, he is dismissed, he is no more to enter the doors: he "abideth not in the house for ever," and when he is once turned out, he is never to enter again. Not so with a child. A child may be refractory, disobedient, rebellious, and even show insults towards his parents; but he is a child still; and as being a child, he will be chastised. The master does not chastise the servant; he dismisses him—sends him about his business—dissolves the tie that exists between them; but he cannot treat a son so. Though he is a rebellious child—a disobedient, refractory son—he is the father's. He has an interest in his bosom, he has a place in his affections, and all his disobedience cannot break the tie. Therefore, the father chastises him; and if the son, in a fit of passion or sullenness, runs away from his father's house, and, like the prodigal, "goes into a far country to waste his substance in riotous living," not all his disobedience, nor even his turning his back on his father's abode, can do away with the ties of blood and relationship, or ever make him not to be a son; and when, in contrition and repentance, he comes once more to his former home, the doors are opened to him as before. But "the servant abideth not in the house for ever." When he leaves voluntarily, or when he is dismissed, he leaves no more to return. The days, indeed, of his stay may be greatly prolonged, but he must leave one day or other. He may even continue until the family is broken up; but when the family is dissolved, he must leave then. So there shall be servants in the visible Church of Christ who may remain with the family until the day comes for the house to be broken up, when the Lord shall come a second time unto salvation, and "the elements shall

melt with fervent heat;" then when the house is dissolved upon earth to be united in heaven, when the members are broken up here below to be gathered into one harmonious body above, the servants and the sons are separated. The one are taken, and the other left; the sons are admitted, and the servants excluded; the doors are opened for the one, and shut upon the other. Hagar and Ishmael are turned out, and Isaac inherits the promise.

II. "But the son abideth ever." We have a very different character to deal with now—one of quite a distinct class, as well as totally different origin. In God's family, as I hinted before, the sons and daughters are of different ages. We find a large part of the living family spoken of in Gal. 4:1, 2, 3, "Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." In God's house, then, there are sons in two different states—sons in their minority, not yet arrived at manhood, and sons grown up, what is commonly called, of age. We will consider the junior branches of the family first. Many of God's children have derived consolation from that text, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." How does he differ nothing from a servant? We must not take this expression in all its latitude, because he differs from a servant very widely. The servant does not owe his natural being to the father; he has no kindred with the head of the house; and therefore it cannot be true in all its latitude, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant;" for he differs in very many things. But in the matter of personal experience, so far as his feelings are concerned, viewed as under bondage to the law, he differeth nothing from a servant, being under rigid rule and government: as the apostle speaks, "He is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father." There are, then, children, sons and daughters in God's house, who in their own feelings "differ nothing from servants"—that is,

they have "the spirit of bondage unto fear" in their bosom; they feel guilt, condemnation, and constraint working powerfully in their hearts; and it is the presence of these servile feelings in their breasts that in a way of experience brings them on a level with servants.

Doubtless some of you, when I was describing just now the feelings of a servant, were writing bitter things against yourselves, and secretly saying, "Ah! that is just my case—I feel all that constraint and bondage; I labour under guilt and fear, when I come to the table of the Lord; I cannot come to God as an accepted child; surely I am a servant and nothing more. Oh! I greatly fear that I am a hypocrite in a profession, and have not a spark of grace in my heart; but I have been thrust forward to do some menial office in the church, and my doom is, not to abide in the house for ever, but to be cast out and dismissed by the mouth of God himself!" But does not the word of God say, that there are sons in the house who "differ nothing from servants"—that is, in their own feelings? Then you may be a son, and yet feel bondage, constraint, and a want of power to draw near unto God with acceptance. You may be an "heir," and yet not have the "Spirit of adoption" to cry, "Abba, Father," and feel no sweet liberty of spirit in approaching a throne of grace, but be "shut up unto the faith which shall hereafter be revealed."

But we shall find, if the Lord enables us to describe the character aright, amidst all their bondage, some feelings in their hearts, which never existed in the heart of a servant. The indescribable emotions that soften and melt the heart of a child, knitting him to his parent, never lodged in the bosom of a servant towards his master. We shall find, for instance, in their hearts reverence and tenderness towards their Parent, though they cannot yet call him, "Abba, Father." There is no filial tenderness in the heart of a servant towards his master; he may respect him, he may be grateful to him for the food and clothing that he gives him; but there is no yearning of reverent affection towards him. Thus, in those living souls that are sons in God's family, but under doubts and fears, there are

tender feelings of reverence towards God as a Parent, working up from beneath all their constraint and miserable servitude. There is no searedness of conscience in them, nor callousness of heart; there is no disregard or disrespect shown to their Parent's word and will; there is no coming before him, as the servant comes, with demure looks and expressions of respect, and then behind his back turning him into ridicule and contempt or perhaps speaking disrespectfully of him to the other servants of the house. But in the real family, however weak they be, however guilty they may feel, and whatever slavish fear they may suffer under, there is some tenderness and filial respect towards their Parent. Some perhaps here have known what it is to have had a harsh father naturally, and have dreaded him so much as scarcely to feel any liberty in his presence. A harshness and reserve on his part kept them from going to him with those feelings of affection and love with which the child can approach his parent when he is kind and gentle to him. But still, in spite of all that dread which his reserve created, you had a tender reverence for him as a parent. You longed for this frozen barrier of reserve to be broken down, and your heart yearned for a smile from him. At any rate there was no disrespect paid to him behind his back and respect shown to his face; there was no siding with the servants against him, nor confederacy with them against his property or character. You could not approach him with the feelings of a child, but there was no plotting against him like a servant. Thus it is, spiritually, with many of God's living family. Though they cannot come into the presence of God with sweet liberty of access; though they cannot approach him with the Spirit of adoption as sons, yet there is a thorough absence of disrespect towards him, an absence of carelessness, whether he frowns upon them or smiles. There is in them a sort of indistinct, yet strong principle of filial reverence towards him, though, from the want of his fatherly smiles, there is not that affectionate boldness and childlike love which distinguish manifested son-ship.

But there are moments when the harsh parent relaxes his coun-

tenance; when he smiles upon the child, whom, for the most part, he treats with reserve and distance The child is anxiously watching his father's countenance; when he comes into the room, he looks at his father's face to see whether there be on it a frown of displeasure, or whether it softens and relaxes into a smile. And if his watchful eye catch his father's features gently softening into a smile, it encourages him to come forward; when, did he observe a frown, he would make a hasty retreat. So with living souls, there is an anxious watching of the countenance of God. "The eyes of all wait upon thee" (Ps. 145:15); so the eyes of a child of God are upon him, watching whether he frowns or whether he smiles; and if he but sees his severe forbidding countenance for God is a severe forbidding judge in the law, disarming itself of its frown, and gently dimpling into a smile, the child is encouraged to go forward; and when he approaches, and the father opens his arms, and gives him a glimpse of affection, he is astonished; and yet is enabled to tell his father how he loves him, and to speak out of his bosom the thoughts and desires that are passing there And yet, when he leaves his father's presence, he is astonished and awe-struck at his own boldness, and wonders how he could have ever been so daring as to break through that barrier which kept him from his father, or how he could speak to him with familiarity. Now, a servant never knows this. Towards the servant the master preserves if he is a wise master the same unvarying aspect; he is always kind, always civil; he does not frown with angry displeasure, nor smile with undue familiarity; but he treats him with distant kindness. That is just the way in which God treats servants. He does not manifestly frown upon them. They have not an inward sense of his displeasure, though they may fear it. They are like a servant who has slandered his master's character, or been injuring his property; when he comes into his master's presence, it is with fear and apprehension; his master, perhaps, takes no notice of it, but there is something in the servant's conscience that tells him he deserves a frown. And so with the servants of God's house. God does not frown upon them; for

they never see his face. He preserves the same unvarying aspect towards them—bestowing providential favours, but neither frowns nor smiles; yet their guilty conscience, knowing their secret sins testifies against them inwardly of expected wrath and condemnation.

But the timid child, whom I have been comparing to a child of God when he has broken through this barrier, though he cannot tell how he has broken through it, yet does not speedily forget the impression that was left behind, nor the sweet breathing of affection in his heart. "Oh," he says, "how I mistook my father—he is not a harsh parent!" The child reasons on with himself: "Oh, what a mistake I have been making! I thought he was so cold, so distant, so reserved; but it is not so—it is only his manner! How he smiled the other day when I went near to him! How kind he was! What kisses of affection he bestowed upon me, and how he took me on his lap! How affectionate he was to me! I will go again!" Well, the child comes another day; the parent's countenance is not as before—there is no smile; and then he has to retreat into the old spot—to go back to his former suspicions and surmises. So the child of God has to fall back into the old spot of doubts, and fears, and bondage, and guilt, and condemnation, thinking it was all his own fancy or his own presumption, that it was not really from God; and he is condemned as having been so presumptuous and daring a wretch as to tell out the feelings of his heart, and say, "my Father," when he goes again, and obtains no access nor liberty, as before.

And so he goes on, sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, sometimes getting a little smile, but much more often repelled with a frown, until at last, as the apostle speaks, "the fulness of the time comes," when the appointed season to favour Zion arrives, and the "Spirit of adoption" is shed abroad in his heart, enabling him to cry, with unwavering lips, "Abba, Father." Then he is enabled to put his hands into the wounds of his Redeemer, and with the faith of Thomas, he exclaims, "My Lord and my God." Then he arrives at

his majority; he is no longer “under tutors and governors,” for “the time appointed of the Father” is come. And he comes, as it were, into some degree of intimacy with his Father; he occupies a new situation; he stands in a new position. He is not, as before, continually tormented and harassed with guilt, and fear, and doubt, and wrath, and bondage; but he has a more endearing access, a stronger “Spirit of adoption,” and is enabled to feel more of the flowings out of Divine affection. The father in a family, though he loves all his children alike if he has the heart of a father, yet will treat them according to their different ages. To his grown-up son he at times communicates freely what passes in his bosom; he thinks him deserving of some confidence: he treats him more as a friend; he discovers to him his plans and intentions. The babe could not understand him; the child of a few years old could not enter into his father’s plans; he does not, nor can he understand, what is passing in his father’s bosom; therefore, he must wait till he comes to his majority; and when he arrives at manhood, the father will treat him with more familiarity. And though the son will still have all the reverence, respect, and awe which a son owes to the parent, yet, mingled with it, there will be more familiar intercourse, and a greater entering into his father’s counsels. As we read, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.” And thus this son, who is in a measure favoured with some intimacy with his Father, as his kind Parent discovers to him more of his standing, opens up to him the mysteries of his ancient covenant, and reveals to him more of salvation through Christ’s blood and righteousness, becomes established and strengthened in the faith and liberty of the Gospel.

“But the son abideth ever.” It is the irreversible blessing of a son, that he is never to be turned out of the house—that the union between the Parent and the child can never be broken, but that he is to reign with Christ through the ages of one everlasting day. This is a sweet consolation to God’s family, that “the son abideth ever.” How often is a child of God exercised, whether he

shall abide for ever, whether he may not draw back to perdition, whether some temptation may not overtake him whereby it shall be made manifest that he is nothing but a deceiver and deceived! But the Lord himself says, "the son abideth ever;" let him be but a babe, let him have but the first beginning of spiritual life in his soul, he "abideth ever;" he has the same interest in the affections of the Father, is a fellow-heir with Christ, and has a title to the same inheritance as those who are of longer standing, and those who are his elders in age.

But sometimes the son shall get tired of the restraint of his Father's house. God is a wise parent, as well as a kind one. He will treat his children with the most tender kindness and intimacy, but he will never allow them to be guilty of disrespect towards him. Sometimes, then, the sons shall get weary of their Father's house; they are like the younger son in the parable, when he asked his father to give him his portion, and when he had got it, he went away into a far country, away from his father's house, from under his father's roof, and wasted it in riotous living. This is where many of God's children get. There is a restraint in God's house, where the soul is really not blessed with the personal and present enjoyment of Gospel truth, and restraint being ever irksome, the vain idolatrous heart thinks it can derive some pleasure from the world which is not to be found under the roof of the father. And, therefore, he gradually withdraws his steps from his father's house, seeks to derive some pleasure from the things of time and sense, erects some idol, and falls down to worship it. But, notwithstanding all this, "the son abideth ever." If he leaves the house, he is not to be an outcast for ever, he is not to be an alien; the father does not take his pen and scratch his name out of the will; does not dissolve the connexion between them, and scatter the relationship to the four winds. The father of all his people in Christ does not disinherit his dear children; and though earthly parents may disinherit theirs, God's family are never cast out of the inheritance. The land might be sold away from the family, but it was to return at the year

of jubilee. It never was to be alienated from generation to generation; it was always to continue in the same family, and to be known by the same name. Thus God never did and never can disinherit an heir of himself, for the elect are "heirs of God," and as being his own heirs, are "joint heirs with Christ." Let them be disobedient children, they are still heirs, and if they sell for a season the inheritance, it will return in the year of jubilee. The true-born Israelite who had waxed poor and sold himself unto the stranger, was to obtain his freedom in the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:47, 54), and to return to his own house and his own estate. So the son who has departed from his father's house, and sold himself under sin, and become a slave to that cruel taskmaster, when the year of jubilee comes, the year of restoration, and the silver trumpet is blown, shakes off his shackles and fetters, casts aside the livery of servitude, returns to his father's house, and is received with joy beneath his father's roof. Oh, what a meeting! The forgiving parent, and the disobedient child! The father dissolved in tears of affection, the child dissolved in tears of contrition! Whatever, then, be our wanderings of heart, alienation of affection, and backsliding of soul; however we may depart from God, so far as we are sons, we shall "abide in the house for ever," and possess an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those that are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." And it will be our mercy to abide in the house below as members of the family, without departing from it, until reunited to the family above, "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."

Some of you here present this morning may have been holding up a shield to ward the arrows from falling upon your conscience, by speaking thus within yourselves, "Shoot away; your arrows cannot touch me; I am not a member of any Church; I am merely one of the congregation; therefore, your arrows fall by me to the right and the left, and not one hits me; I never was in the house; there is my breast-plate of proof, and all your shafts fall short of the

mark." Let me, however, once more bend my bow, if peradventure the Lord shall direct the arrow through the joints of your harness. Are you a professor of vital godliness? Have you made any separation from the world lying dead in wickedness and the world lying dead in profession? Then be you, or be you not, a member of any Gospel Church, you are still a member of Christ's visible Church upon earth; you are still an inmate in the house below; and if so, you are either a servant or a son. Then weigh up, and examine well what are the secret feelings that, from time to time, take place in your bosom. Have I described your character as a servant? Is there an inward voice in conscience that tells you are standing in presumptuous liberty, and in vain confidence; that you have no reverence or godly fear; that you have no affection or sympathy toward the living family; that what you do, you do out of constraint and burdensome bondage? that you never had any filial access to God; and that he never bestowed upon you one smile? Then you are a servant; and what is your doom? "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." Oh, cutting words, "the servant abideth not in the house for ever!" He is to be taken away out of God's Church, perhaps, visibly before men, or perhaps left to continue till that day, when God shall dissolve your union with the professing Church by dissolving the union of your body and soul.

But there shall be others who say, "I hardly know what to make of myself; you have puzzled me strangely this morning. You have been telling me that the marks of a servant are guilt, bondage, condemnation, and fear; I thought that these were marks of a child of God; I have considered these were evidences of a living soul. And if I am not much mistaken, you yourself, and that during your present visit amongst us, have brought these forward as marks of grace." I have never said that nothing but condemnation, nothing but servile bondage, nothing but guilt and fear are marks and evidences of Divine life in the soul. I have always said, since I knew anything of these matters, that there were in the living soul, when first quickened into a spiritual existence, fear and guilt and con-

demnation; but if you have been attending to the line that I have been attempting, however feebly, to draw, you will see, that I have been endeavouring to show the co-existence of other feelings, and those of a filial kind, with the distressing exercises of guilt and bondage; and endeavouring to prove how these two distinct sets of feelings work together in the same bosom. Because you feel guilt, wrath, doubt, fear, and condemnation, it does not prove that you are not a child of God; it does not prove that you are, but it does not prove that you are not. If it be guilt spiritually laid upon your conscience, it is from God; and if it be condemnation brought with power to your heart, it is an evidence of your being under Divine teaching. But I would rather look at other feelings which are working in your bosom. What tenderness there is toward God, what feeling of holy awe concerning him in your soul, what affection you have to the living, family, what trembling at God's Word, what occasional access, what transient glimpses of his countenance, what sense at times of liberty in prayer, and what breathing desires of affection toward him, even though you cannot without guilt cry, "Abba, Father!" But as the non-elect have guilt and condemnation, as Cain, Esau, and Judas, when we come to evidences, we must confine ourselves to what is peculiar to the elect; and therefore, though fear, and bondage, and so on, exist in the elect as feelings, I dare not set them up as evidences. To build up a man in the mere evidences of doubt and fear and guilt and condemnation, is not according to the Scriptures of truth, nor is it according to the line that I trust the Holy Ghost has traced out in my conscience. I have, indeed, had in my conscience, guilt, fear, bondage, doubt, and condemnation; but I might, with great justice, write against myself most bitter things, if I could not trace other spiritual feelings, other heavenly tokens, other Divine marks than these—I might then with great justice consider myself nothing hut a servant in God's house; but I am glad sometimes to find some better tokens of grace than guilt and condemnation. Then, if you would weigh yourselves up in the balance of the sanctuary, you must look at other things

in the scale beside the wrath, doubt, fear, guilt, and condemnation that you are exercised with. Is there anything in you resembling the babe on its mother's lap? It stretches forth its hands towards its father, though not able to call him by that endearing name, not able to clasp its arms around his neck, but there is still a reaching forth of its little hands with a desire to do so. If you are a child, there will be a stretching forth of your hands unto God; and more than that, nothing but his love can satisfy your hearts. The servant does not want the love of the master of the house; all that he wants is good wages, a good table to be kept and very little work; and if he can get that, what does he care for affection or anything like love? He wants it not, he understands it not. So the servants in God's house below. Let them have the high wages regularly paid them of man's esteem; let them have their abundant meal of doctrines and duties, and very little work of self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh; and they want no manifestations of mercy and love.

But if you are a son, however weak and feeble you may be, you will abide for ever in God's house; and he will lead you on, day by day, into a deeper acquaintance with his fatherly feelings toward you, strengthen your weak faith to enable you to lay hold of him more as a parent, and, at times, sweetly encourage you to pour out your soul at his feet, till you can cry unto him, "Abba, Father," from the depths of a broken spirit, without any taint of guilt or any suspicious whispering of fear.

23 FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, White Chapel on
Lord's Day Evening,

July 4, 1841

"That thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."

1 Timothy 1:18, 19

I have been frequently led to admire, and I trust, not only to admire, but to feel also, the Epistles of Paul to Timothy. There are in them, to my mind, two very striking features. The one is the mellowed tone which is diffused through them. "Paul, the aged," writes as one meekened and softened by his long and wearisome pilgrimage; therefore, though he writes with authority as an apostle, yet that authority is tempered by a spirit of meekness and gentleness, produced by a long series of afflictions and consolations, as well as by the recollection of what he had been before grace come into his heart. He never forgot that he had "persecuted the church of God," had been "a blasphemer and injurious;" and the continual recollection of what he had been before the Lord called him by his grace, kept him humble at his feet. Therefore, he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Still the chief of sinners, though "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles;" "less than the least of all saints," though he had been caught up to the third heaven, and there had heard unspeakable words, which were not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter. The other feature in these two Epistles is, the fatherly tone in which he writes to Timothy, as being "his own son in the faith;" not using the language of haughty dictation, as though Timothy were to bow down to him sitting in the professor's chair; but writing with authority as his father in Christ, and yet that authority softened down by the affection which he had towards him as his "dearly beloved son." Thus the warnings and instructions which he gives to his son Timothy, however solemn and faithful they are, are yet mingled with the utmost tenderness of affection and feeling. And it is this union of faithfulness and affection which gives point to all instruction, as well as edge and force to all reproof. The minister who stands up in the name of God to take forth the precious from the vile, should combine (and he will combine them, if the Lord the Spirit is his teacher) the extremest faithfulness with the tenderest affection; so that he may come up to that standard laid

down to Paul, "speaking the truth in love." Truth must needs offend; it is a sword with a keen and cutting edge, and must needs inflict deep and painful wounds in the conscience. But we are not called upon to jag the edge by harshness in our manner and spirit, but so to use the word of truth, "the sword of the Spirit," that it may do just God's work and no more, that it may just cut between flesh and spirit, natural religion and spiritual religion, and yet not so cut as to cut away anything of God's implantation, or to wound the tenderest heart that God himself has touched with his finger. But as in other cases, here we continually err. I know not what you feel, but I know that I have never done anything right in my life; I have never said a word, nor ever done an action that could bear a strict and spiritual scrutiny. Something of my own has marred it before, in, or after it passed from me. If it came from right motives, some base and selfish feeling mingled with it and defiled it. Nor have I ever been able to wield the sword of truth aright. My heart has staggered, and my hand wavered between the two extremes of harshness and softness; and all I seem to have said and done has been clumsily and ineffectually, like one fighting with an enemy in a dream, aiming right, but the sinews weak, and the arm unsteady, and every blow powerless and vain.

The apostle then lays before his son Timothy most solemn warnings and most profitable instruction; and yet the blessed Spirit so filled his heart with tenderness, and so anointed his pen with authority and power, that one alive in God's fear cannot recoil from the one or the other. And as our text seems to contain in it this admixture of instruction, warning, and tenderness, I shall, without farther preface, simply take up the subject as it lies before me, believing that rightly to divide "the word of truth," and to divide the living from the dead, is a division more suitable with the Scriptures, and more profitable to the people of God, than a formal division into heads of my own making, which were I to adopt, I should probably not be able to adhere to. "That thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience, which some

having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

“That thou by them.” What does the apostle mean by this expression? It refers to the words that immediately precede. “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies that went before on thee, that thou by them” (that is, by the prophecies, according to them, in obedience to them, acting with reference to them), “mightest war a good warfare.” In the primitive church!: there were persons who were called prophets (1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). Their office was not, generally speaking, to predict future events,—they were not prophets in the Old Testament sense of the word, but they were what we should call, in modern language, “preachers.” This seems evident from the effect ascribed to their prophesying (1Corinthians 14:24-25). “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.” Here we see what the effect of their prophesying was. The prediction of future events could not “judge,” that is, condemn a casual hearer, nor make manifest the secrets of his heart; but the preaching of truth in the power of God the Holy Ghost, is every way calculated to convince of sin, and lay bare the hidden recesses of conscience. Again, we read, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other” (that is those who sit by), “judge,” that is, decide, if he preaches truth. They could not judge whether he predicted future events aright, for that could be proved only by their fulfilment. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” The prediction of events to come, communicates neither instruction nor comfort at the time, but preaching does both. And, therefore, we gather that these prophets were not prophets in the strict sense of the term, as predicting events to come, but preachers of God’s truth. Now it seems that when Timothy was set apart for the work of the ministry, there were certain prophecies uttered by those preachers in the church to which Tim-

othy belonged. No doubt, lessons of instruction how Timothy was to conduct himself; no doubt, lessons of deep and solemn warning, that he should be faithful to the Lord that had put him into the ministry; no doubt, encouragements also and promises that the Lord would stand by him, and enable him to do that work to which he had called him.

The apostle then, writing to Timothy, reminds him of what was spoken to him, when he was set apart for the ministry. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them," that is, "that thou" in strict compliance with them, "that thou" by their weight and their power resting upon thy mind, "that thou" by the application of them to thy conscience, and by walking in the path to which those prophecies pointed, "that thou," in strict accordance with those solemn words of instruction which were dropped from the mouth of God through his prophets, "mightest war that good warfare" to which thou art called. This seems to me to be the most consistent and the most scriptural interpretation of the words.

But we gather from this apostolic charge, that Timothy was a soldier of Jesus Christ. He says to him, in his second Epistle (2Tim. 2:3,4), teaching him under figures, "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Timothy then had been enlisted under the banner of the Lord. He was no voluntary recruit, but the Lord "had chosen him to be a soldier," had selected him out of others for the express purpose that he might fight his battles, had called him by his grace, and quickened him by his Spirit, had put upon him the whole armour of God, equipping him with "the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, having shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and girt his loins about with truth," and thus sent him into the field to war a good warfare, and to fight under the banner of Immanuel.

The apostle then, addressing him as a "faithful soldier of Jesus Christ" tells him that he must "war a good warfare," and gives him some instructions how he is to war this "good warfare," by holding "faith and a good conscience," solemnly warning him that some who had put away "a good conscience, concerning faith had made a shipwreck." The first part of his injunction is "to war a good warfare." This implies that there is such a thing as warring a bad warfare for if there were no warring a bad warfare, there could be no meaning in the charge, that he was to war "a good warfare." There are many who are guilty of this capital charge. Those, for instance, war a bad warfare who fight on the side of error against truth: this comprehends all Arminians, Arians, Socinians, and other opposers of the doctrines of grace. Those too war a bad warfare who fight against the convictions of their own consciences, and against all the solemn warnings that are in the word of God against the impenitent, the ungodly, and the unbelieving. But the charge given to Timothy that he was to take especial heed to war "a good warfare," implies that it is possible even for the soldier of the Lord to war a bad warfare. The good soldier then wars a bad warfare, when he goes out into the field of battle in his own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, "at his own charges," as the apostle elsewhere speaks (1Corinthians 9:7), equipped in armour of his own making, and his own putting on. Of this folly those are guilty who attempt to convince people of the truths of religion by argument, to make proselytes to a certain scheme of doctrine, and to enlist under the banner of party those whom the Spirit of God does not call by his quickening grace.

He, too, wars a bad warfare who contends for truth in a bitter spirit, who dips his words in vinegar, and cannot spread forth a table with the milk and honey of the gospel, without setting on it the wormwood and gall of his own morose temper.

He also wars a bad warfare, who distresses "the poor and needy" of Gods family. He plays the part of Amalek, who fell upon the rear of Israel's army, and "smote the hindmost of them, even

all that were feeble, faint, and weary” (Deuteronomy 25:18), and, therefore, unable to keep up with the march of Israel.

Timothy was a minister of righteousness, and yet Paul warns him to war a good warfare. Ministers, then, of truth may be led aside into warring a bad warfare. Good men have preached the gospel in their own spirit; have built up hypocrites and distressed the living family; have sought to make proselytes to their own opinions, rather than to bring converts to the feet of Jesus; have gone forth in their own strength, as though they would beat down error by weapons of their own manufacture, instead of going as “poor and needy,” weak and feeble, and hanging wholly and solely upon the strength of the Lord.

And so private Christians war a bad warfare, by fighting with weapons which are not put into their hands by the Spirit of God. The living soul sometimes finds a powerful working of sin in him, a rising up of base lusts, craving and hankering after forbidden things. Convinced of the guilt of these things, and of the hatred of God against them, he seeks to overcome them in the strength of the flesh. This is not warring “a good warfare,” because he wars not against his passions with spiritual weapons, but encounters flesh by flesh, and employs the strength and wisdom of the creature to keep down the evil and corruption of the creature.

Others of God’s children war not “a good warfare,” by not keeping to the post which the Lord has assigned them in the battle. The Lord places each of his children in a certain post; some he chooses should be weak and feeble; others he chooses should be powerful and strong. Some he sends into the front ranks to fight manfully “the good fight of faith;” others he places in the rear, because he knows that they are not strong enough to fight against his enemies. He, then, whom God places in the front rank to fight his battles, that deserts his post through cowardice or love of lucre, wars not “a good warfare;” he is a deserter from the post where the Lord has placed him. And he that rushes, uncalled, into the front rank, when the Lord has assigned him an inferior place; he that, instigated by

his own pride and presumption, pushes himself into the pulpit, without the Lord's calling him up there, wars not a good warfare, by assuming a situation to which the Captain of armies has never appointed him. He too wars a bad warfare, that leagues with God's enemies, and deserts God's friends, that wears the regimentals of the corps in which he is enlisted, and yet is carrying on treacherous designs with the enemy. Are there not professors of religion, yea, some who we hope are God's people, that can be, as they say, "all things to all men," and change their creed according to their company, that desert the principles which they profess to hold in one place, when those principles are attacked in another? And thus wearing the dress, and receiving the pay of the great King, they through cowardice, or fickleness, espouse the part of the enemy.

Again; those war a bad warfare who hang on the outskirts of the army, watching every unguarded place, observing every wavering regiment, scanning with curious eyes the weakest points, and, perhaps, affording intelligence to the enemy. These are the spies and renegades that hang upon the flanks of the army of the LORD of Hosts. Are not some such here? you keen-eyed observers that are watching for the slips and falls of God's children, that are ready to catch up every incautious expression dropped from their lips, that are ever seeking to make a minister an offender for a word, and carp and cavil unless every syllable be squared or rounded according to your fancy, are not you warring a bad warfare?

But the apostle tells Timothy what weapons he must make use of in order to war "a good warfare." "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." These are the two weapons which the LORD of Hosts equips his champions with, and which he bids them hold fast. We will consider them separately, and see how appropriate and suitable these weapons are to the soldiers that fight under the Lord's banner.

The first weapon which he is to hold is "faith." It is not an implement for show, but for use; not to be suspended in the armoury,

like the pistols and bayonets in the Tower, nor like a rusty broadsword over a man's chimney piece; but to be grasped and held. But before he can hold it he must have it. The weapon must be put into his hands. It is the King's gift, for faith is "the gift of God." It is that which is committed to him. "O Timothy," he says, "keep that which is committed unto thy trust." The weapon of faith, therefore, is put into the hand of the soldiers of the cross; not suspended in God's word, that armoury of truth; not admired as worn by the side of others; not a mere weapon in readiness for some nightly thief, which may never be needed for a whole life; but a weapon for daily use, first received and then held, and wielded in such a way as the Lord himself shall direct.

But what has faith to do in this "good warfare?" why should it be so important, so indispensable a weapon? Because every step of ground that we advance upon, we can only advance upon through faith; every enemy that we have to contend against, we can only contend against in faith; every promise that shall be for our support, every instruction which shall direct us how to act, every reproof and solemn rebuke that shall be for our spiritual chastisement, we can only receive by faith. And, therefore, the soldier, without the weapon of faith, stands naked and defenceless before his enemy. Think not yourselves, then, soldiers in the army of the LORD of Hosts, unless you know something of what it is to hold the weapon of faith in your hands.

This "good warfare" is carried on against three principal enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil; and each of these enemies so closely allied to ourselves, and each so powerful and so hostile, that they must surely overcome us, unless we are "strengthened with strength in the inner man." There is the flesh, with all its baits, charms, and subtle attractions continually laying its gins and traps for our feet; perpetually ensnaring us in some evil word or some evil work, and we in ourselves utterly defenceless against it.—Said I defenceless?—yea, eager to run into it, like the silly bird that sees the grains of corn spread in the trap, but thinks not, when

it flutters around it, that the brick will fall and confine it a prisoner. So we, allured by a few grains of corn spread before our eyes, often see not the snare, until we are fast entangled therein. Faith, then, is that eye of the soul which sees the concealed hook; by faith we call upon the Lord to deliver us from snatching at the bait; and by faith, as a spiritual weapon, we cut at times the snare asunder. Oh, how defenceless are we, when the temptations and allurements of the flesh plead for indulgence, unless faith is in exercise, unless faith realises the hatred of God against sin, and brings into our consciences a sense of God's heart-searching eye, and his wrath against all transgression! But where the Lord has put this weapon of faith into the hand of his soldier, he will often strengthen his arm to wield it in these seasons of extremity, even though that weapon should cut and wound self.

How Joseph was enabled to resist the snares spread for his feet, by calling to mind the presence of the Lord! How he was strengthened to break asunder that bond which was fast twining round his heart, when faith sprung up in his soul, and he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" How the three children who were about to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, unless they would worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, overcame that dreadful temptation to renounce their God and prove apostates, by living faith. How the worthies record in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, who wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: "out of weakness were made strong and waxed valiant in fight," simply through that faith whereby they were enabled to see the invisible God and the glories of the unseen world! And how in this country, and in this very metropolis, martyrs have gone to the stake, and died horrible deaths, rather than renounce the Lord Jesus, simply and solely through the exercise of that living faith which the God of all grace had implanted in their souls! Oh, what a weapon faith is, when the lord does but give us power to wield it! How, as Hart says,

It cuts its way through hosts of devils While they fall before the word.

But when sin, temptation, and unbelief beat this weapon out of our hands, when it lies seemingly shivered at our feet, and we cannot get another such sword from God's armoury, how we stand naked and defenceless before our enemies. Therefore what need we have not merely of this heavenly grace in our souls, but to hold it fast and not let it go, lest the enchantress should catch our feet in her wiles and snares.

So again with respect to the world. What a snare the world is to God's people! Oh, the excitement of the past week! {The week of the general election of members of Parliament for the City of London and Metropolitan boroughs.} How many of God's children has it ensnared! How they have been carried headlong into the whirlpool of politics! How anxious they have been that the side which they favoured should be triumphant, and how deeply interested in all that has taken place! How their hearts have been drawn away from Him who sitteth enthroned on the water-floods, holding the reins of government, and directing all things according to the counsel of his own will! But faith in a man's bosom in lively exercise will make him proof against such political agitation, such carnal excitement. He that can look upon a suffering Jesus, that can view with eyes of faith an agonizing God, who receives into his soul dewdrops of atoning blood, and manifestations of redeeming mercy, who longs after some secluded spot, where he can hold sweet communion with the risen Lord of life and glory, what interest can he feel who holds the helm of politics, or who stands at the head of the poll? But only so far as faith realizes these eternal realities, and the soldier of the cross holds his weapon fast, can he overcome that intoxicating spirit of political excitement which now makes well nigh every heart to beat and every eye to glisten. Only by faith leading him into some spiritual sympathy and communion with heavenly things can he view these exciting scenes as an empty pageant, a gaudy show that is passing away with all its actors into an eternity

of woe.

So again when Satan comes in with his fierce temptations and fiery darts, what but faith can enable the soul to stand up against them, as the apostle says, "above all having the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). Nothing but faith in God, in his power and presence; nothing but faith in Jesus, in his blood and his righteousness; nothing but faith in the Holy Ghost, as lifting up a standard in the heart by means of his divine operations; nothing but faith in a triune God can enable the soul to battle against Satan's assaults. Therefore see how indispensable faith is to fight a good fight, yea, so indispensable that a good fight is called emphatically "the fight of faith;" "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), implying that true faith will enable a man to come off more than conqueror through every battle and to survive every conflict.

But the apostle adds another word, and a very solemn word it is, "holding faith," he says, "and a good conscience, which" (that is a "good conscience," the word in the original being in the single number) "some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."

There is another weapon, then, which the soldier of the cross has, and holds—"a good conscience." We find that, in the apostle's time, there were characters who held faith, or rather what they called faith, and put away "good conscience." He mentions by name, "Hymeneus and Alexander, whom he had delivered unto Satan," that is, excommunicated them out of the church, as heretics and blasphemers. But if to have put good conscience away, stamps a man as unfit for the visible church of God, it behoves us to search whether we have this weapon at our side, and in our hand. What does the apostle, then, mean by "a good conscience?" I believe he means a conscience alive in God's fear, a spiritual conscience, a tender conscience, what he calls, in another part, "a pure conscience:" "holding faith in a pure conscience," that is, purified from ignorance, from guilt, from the power of sin, "a conscience

void of offence toward God and men." Wherever, then, there is living faith in the soul, there will be united with it "a good conscience." The Lord never sends forth a soldier to fight his battles with the weapon of faith only, he puts faith in one hand and "a good conscience" in the other. And he that goes forth with what he thinks to be faith, and casts aside "a good conscience," will manifest himself to be one of those characters, who "concerning faith make shipwreck."

This is a solemn word of warning for you, that despise the workings of conscience, that think it legal, that are all for faith, and scorn all admonitions of an inward monitor. May the Lord apply it to your souls, lest you should prove to be one of those characters, who, having put away "a good conscience," "concerning faith! will make shipwreck."

But why is it called "a good conscience?" Because it comes down from God, who is the author of all good, the giver of "every good gift, and every perfect gift." There is none good but he (Matthew 19:17), and there is nothing good but what he himself implants and communicates. This weapon of a good conscience, that the Lord arms his soldiers with, works with faith, as well as proves its sincerity of faith, and tests its genuineness and reality. Faith, without a good conscience, is dead. It bears upon it the mark of nature, and however high it may rise in confidence, or however it may seem to abound in good works, it is not the faith of God's elect, of which the end is the salvation of the soul.

But it may be asked, how does a good conscience work with faith? What is the connexion between these two weapons, and how do they mutually support and strengthen each other? In this way. What faith believes, good conscience feels; what faith receives, good conscience holds; what faith embraces, good conscience rivets fast; when faith is weak, good conscience is feeble; and when faith is strong, good conscience is active. They grow and they wane together, and like two stems from one root together do they flourish and fade. For instance, sometimes through cowardice we

shrink back from the post to which God has assigned us. How glad should I often be never to mount a pulpit again. How willing should I be, at times, to retire to some sequestered spot, to live a quiet and secluded life, and be set free from all the trying exercises of the ministry, and all the arrows that presumptuous professors and ungodly men shoot at every one who desires to be faithful. But I feel that this cannot be; I have put my hand to the plough and dare not look back. "A good conscience" begins to work. What! to leave the Lord's work, and slink away, because the arrows fly thick and fast! To desert one's allotted post! Why, a sentinel that leaves his beat because the night is cold, or the enemy near, runs a risk of being shot. He has deserted his post through effeminacy or cowardice. He does not "endure hardness," or he turns back in the day of battle.

Sometimes, on the other hand, as I hinted before, there is that in us, which would push us out of the place which God has assigned us, would thrust us forward, when the Lord's inward work would keep us back. Here too, "good conscience" begins to work. It manifests the secret presumption of those steps; its acute ear detects the hollow ground upon which we are walking; its piercing eye discovers the volcano, near the crater of which we are treading; it checks the onward step, and realizing some measure of the displeasure of God against those who slight his word, brings back the soul to its right place, the spot where the Holy Ghost has himself set it down. Thus, if a man goes too forward, "good conscience" pulls him down to his place. If a man slink backward, "good conscience" pushes him forward into the spot which God has assigned him. Thus "good conscience" keeps the soldier at the post where the God of armies has placed him.

So, when the flesh presents its tempting baits, and comes forward with all its allurements, "good conscience" is the sentinel on the watch. "Good conscience" descries the wriggling serpent gliding through the grass; sees the crest and hears the hissing of the adder. Before the rattle-snake springs forward, it hears the

rattle, and begins to alarm and warn the soul of the dangers unperceived by all but itself. Thus “good conscience,” as a watchful sentinel sounding the alarm in the soul, pulls the soldier back from the dangers that beset his path. It warns him of the mines that the enemy is working under his feet; points out the hidden stakes on which he might run and destroy himself; gives him notice of the stratagems and ambushes which the enemy is preparing. And thus, “good conscience,” sounding its alarm in his ear, keeps him from the snare that is spread for his feet.

So, when the world, that powerful antagonist of the living soul, hangs out its charms, or brings forward its fear, when it comes in this shape, “If you join yourselves to the people of God, you will sink in everybody’s estimation, you will lose your character, will injure your property, will offend your friends, will disgrace, as they consider it, your relations:” “good conscience” answers, “I am firmly convinced that those whom you despise are the people of the living God; that the experience which you ridicule is the truth of God; that the things I have received are things to live and die by; and therefore I will cleave to them at any cost, knowing that salvation is in them.” Thus, “good conscience” keeps a man from being carried away by the fear of the world. So, when lukewarm professors seek to draw us aside into their smooth, and easy path, “good conscience” is upon the watch; “good conscience” calls to remembrance the sufferings of Jesus; and reminds us of the Lord’s dealings with all his saints, and with our own souls in times past the Lord the Spirit drops his admonitions into the ear of conscience, and it testifies against all flowery paths of religion, and sounds aloud, “Through much tribulation must you enter the kingdom of God.” So, also, when Satan, the third antagonist of the living soul—the third enemy of the soldiers of the Lord, infuses base imaginations, and hurls his fiery darts, “good conscience,” being alive in God’s fear recoils with horror from his injections, and calls loudly upon the Lord to bruise him under our feet, and give us help and strength to resist his fearful insinuations. Or when this

subtle enemy changes his garb, and transforms himself into an angel of light “good conscience,” living under the Spirit’s teachings, sees the swarthy skin under the robe of light, and resists his delusions as firmly as his blasphemies.

He then alone wars the good warfare, who goes forth with faith in the one hand, and “good conscience” in the other; faith strengthening conscience, and conscience strengthening faith; each doing their separate office, but still tending to one end; each accomplishing the work which the Lord had appointed, and yet each fighting the Lord’s battles, and bringing the soldier safe and victorious over his enemy.

But there were those in the apostle’s time, as there are those in our time, who “put away good conscience.” “All they wanted,” said they, “was faith; what had they to do with conscience? What need they mind about sin? Sin could not damn them or do them any harm; sin could not blot their names out of the covenant; a child of God could not backslide, “for his new nature, argued they with logical dexterity,” could not go backward, and his old nature never went forward, and so, between the two, backsliding was impossible. A true believer always stood firm in the liberty of the gospel, and was not to be entangled in the yoke of bondage. What then had they to do with this legal conscience? These characters are described by Jude (Jude 1:1-2) as “feeding themselves without fear;” and by Peter, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.” Their very language testifies an absence of living faith. They had what they called “faith,” but which would more properly be called, vain confidence, presumption, and delusion.” Bolstered up by this, they put away “good conscience.” They would not have the ballast in the hold, that they might sail the faster. They did not want exercises, temptations, doubts, fears, distresses, and soul conflicts; they wanted to hoist the main-sail to the wind. But this lightening of their ship by casting their lading into the sea, when they loose the rudder-bands, and hoist up the mainsail to the wind, will bring them into the same spot into

which it brought the ship in which Paul was a prisoner. "And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained immovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves." (Acts 27:41) That was the fruit of casting the wheat into the sea, and hoisting the mainsail to the wind. And those will meet with the same fate who cast out the ballast, and throw overboard "good conscience" as so much lumber and legality, who heave into the sea this burdensome companion, this moping creature that is always croaking between decks. Many professors in our day put away "good conscience." They want to travel faster than "good conscience will allow. They love a few sins which "good conscience" remonstrates against. They like their strong glass, and a little worldly conversation, and a little merry-making and amusement. A Christian, say they, is to be a cheerful character, he is not to be ever crying and groaning and sighing, and to confine himself to a few poor, moping creatures like himself, but to be lively and agreeable, to go into the world, and let his "light so shine before men," that they may see his good works (Matthew 5:16). 'And' (say others, of the same cast,) in business, we must do as other people do. There is no carrying on trade now-a-days unless you do business as it is generally done. You must not be so particular and so nice about drawing bills upon fictitious credit. If there is an advantage to be taken over an unwary customer, why it is quite reasonable to take it, and make the most of your superior knowledge. People,' he says, 'of a scrupulous conscience may indeed call it cheating and swindling, but we call it a matter of trade, all in the way of business. I don't see' he argues, 'why the professor of religion should be debarred from acting as others, or why he should suffer in the world, as he can never rise to be a respectable tradesman, unless he takes such advantages as other people take in the same line of business.' Now what is all this? It is putting away "a good conscience." It is casting aside that which God stamps in his word as a weapon for his soldiers to hold fast. It is manifesting the black mark of reprobation—a seared conscience. It is showing the

cloven foot beneath the robe of profession. And what is the consequence? "Concerning faith they make shipwreck." That will be the fearful end, the awful termination of the voyage. And how do they make shipwreck? They strike upon some sandbank, or some hidden shoal, and when they are stuck fast there, the waves of God's vengeance, and the winds which he has held in his fists, rise in everlasting fury, beat against the ship, and dash it into a thousand pieces. As long as there were no shoals or rocks, they could ride gallantly over the waves, and outsail many a deeply laden vessel, but when they struck upon the reef, and the breakers beat over their heads, they soon went down into the boiling waves. Thus some of these gallant ships run upon the sandbank of open sin, and when they are firmly fixed there, God manifests his wrath in their consciences, the waves of his indignation beat upon them, and down they go to eternal perdition with all their sins upon their heads. Others seem to be making with crowded sails for the harbour. But just as they near the port, a sudden and violent gust dashes them against the pier-head, and they make shipwreck, at the very moment when they think that they are about to enter, with flowing sheet, into the haven of eternal rest. Their false peace gives way on a deathbed, and they die in all the agonies of despair. And why do they make shipwreck? Because they sailed forth in a ship of their own providing; because the Lord never sat at the helm; because "good conscience" was never upon the look-out; because faith was never examining the chart; and because there was no anxiety nor earnest cry, that the heavenly Pilot would steer their bark through the shoals and sandbanks which lay in their course. But, on they went recklessly and carelessly; "sure," they said, to be saved; they never could be lost; they stood so strong in Christ, they had such a scriptural creed, and were so well satisfied with the security of the ancient settlements, and eternal covenant transactions, that they were certain of going to heaven." And thus driven on by presumption, and neglecting all reproofs, warnings, precepts, and rebukes, trusting to the mere letter of truth, and ignorant of heavenly pow-

er, they made shipwreck of that very thing in which they put all their reliance—their faith. Now, these characters never had living faith, the faith of God's elect. Had they been possessed of divine faith, they would have had "a good conscience" with it. And therefore, when the apostle says, "who having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck," he does not mean to say, they had made shipwreck of real faith, but in matter of faith, concerning that which they esteemed to be faith, but which, in reality, was daring presumption, of such faith as they had made shipwreck. That bark to which they trusted their lives, and in which they expected to sail into the harbour of endless bliss, foundered and went down, because it was not built, chartered, steered, and preserved by the hands of God himself.

Now, you whom the Lord, as you profess, has called out of the world, and out of the general religion of the day to stand by the side of the gospel truth, what know you of these weapons? Has God equipped you with his own hands? Has he girt the sword of faith by your side? Has he put this divine weapon into your hands? Examine the blade; look at its temper; mark its edge. Is it of the true Damascus sort? Has it been steeped in the waters of Jordan? Has it been framed in the heavenly armoury? What is the other weapon that accompanies it? Is it "a good conscience," a tender conscience; a living conscience, a conscience that trembles at God's word? We cannot often see our faith, but we can sometimes see our conscience. We cannot always rejoice in the Lord, but we can see whether we fear his great name. We cannot always triumph over our enemies, but we can sometimes observe whether there is a sentinel upon the look-out. Thus, if you want to know whether you have faith, look at faith's companion, see what faith is attended by, and if you find not "a good conscience," write death upon your religion. Throw away your sword; it is useless; it is of human manufacture; it will break in pieces when you have to encounter your enemy, the king of terrors; God's lightnings will shiver it then. But if the Lord has given you "a good conscience," a tender conscience,

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a pure conscience, he will strengthen your arm to fight “the good fight of faith.” You will often think your sword is so short, and your arm so weak that you cannot fight the Lord’s battles. But if he has given you “a good conscience,” a conscience tender in his fear, he has put into your hands the sword of faith, and he will one day manifest it clearly, that he has himself equipped you with it, by giving you victory over all your foes. Oh, may the Lord raise up in our hearts, some sweet testimony, that we have “a good conscience,” and then we shall have this blessed consolation, that concerning faith we shall not make shipwreck.

24 THE KINGDOM OF GOD HID FROM THE WISE AND REVEALED UNTO BABES

Preached at Romney Street Chapel, Westminster, on Tuesday Evening

6th July, 1841

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

Matthew 11:25

It is impossible to understand aright many of the expressions that fell from the lips of Jesus when He was tabernacling upon earth, unless we bear in mind who Jesus is. I mean, that many of the words that dropped from His lips, are only to be understood so far as we have some spiritual view of Him as uniting in one glorious person two distinct natures, of His being “Emmanuel, God with us,” God incarnate, God having taken into union with Himself that holy human nature which was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And thus, when we view Christ as a man, and as such the servant of the Father, according to those words, “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth” Isa 42:1, we can understand some of

those expressions which He made use of, which would be utterly inexplicable if we viewed Him simply as God, one with the Father in essence, glory, and power.

It was a part of His covenanted undertaking to become man; as the apostle speaks, "He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" Php 2:7. It was a part of this taking upon Him the form of a servant, to have all the submission of a servant blended with all the reverence and affection of a son. As a servant, too, He covenanted to be exercised with temptations, to undergo sufferings, and by them learn submission, as the apostle speaks Heb 5:8: "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." So that though He laid not His Godhead by, by taking into union with it our nature, yet in His expressions upon earth, He felt and spoke not so much as God, as man; and therefore, speaking in His covenant relationship as a servant, and yet a son, He uses expressions which could not be very well consistent were He only viewed as God essentially, as the second Person in the glorious Godhead. For instance, He says in the text, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Such a sentence as that can only be interpreted consistently by viewing it as an expression of Jesus, as the servant of the Father, because, as God, His will is identical with the Father's will, His power is identical with the Father's power, for He and His Father are one. And therefore, when He thanks Him for hiding these things from "the wise and prudent", He speaks not as one who was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, not as one who was one with Him in essence, and one with Him in glory: but He speaks as man, and therefore as man submitting Himself to the righteous dispensations of God, bowing down as a servant to the sovereignty of God, and as such fully pleased and satisfied with all the manifestations of the sovereignty of Jehovah.

The apostle says: "We have the mind of Christ" 1Co 2:16. Then

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if you and I are like-minded with the apostle, we shall be brought at times and seasons to the same spot where Jesus was, when He uttered these words. Divine sovereignty will be to us no harsh, repulsive doctrine; it will not be one from which we recoil with horror; it will not be one against which we fight with enmity; nor one which we shall put away from us as something unintelligible, mysterious, incomprehensible, with which we have nothing to do. But so far as we have the mind of Christ, have the image of Jesus stamped upon us, have the wisdom of Christ made perfect in us, and some experimental knowledge of Jesus by receiving Him into our hearts as our only God and Saviour, we shall be brought by the Spirit of God to the identical spot, where He was as man, and be able to say, at times and seasons, as He was enabled to say: "I Thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

All those, then, that fight against divine sovereignty, that shoot arrows of contempt and hatred against the election of the saints before all time, and predestination of all human events, the particular and personal redemption of the church of God by the blood-shedding of Jesus, and the sure and certain perseverance of the elect to eternal glory—all that fight against these doctrines, and shoot arrows of malicious enmity against them, bear this stamp, that they have not the mind of Christ, that they are not under spiritual teaching, that they are not brought into an acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus", that they are not led into that path in which the Son of God walked, that they are not treading in the footsteps of Jesus while He tabernacled here upon earth.

We will then, with God's blessing, look this evening at that truth, to which Jesus bowed with every feeling of His soul, before which, as man, He prostrated Himself with all that reverence which dwelt in His human nature, and for which He blessed and praised God, not only as a truth, but also for the manifestation and discovery of it. We will look at the text pretty much as it lies, taking

up those points which seem to stand forth in the most prominent light.

I. We find, then, certain characters spoken of in the text, from whom certain truths are hidden, and that by the sovereignty of God, by the special intervention and interposition of Jehovah; not merely hidden in a way of providence, but hidden in a way of direct instrumentality, so that God Himself hides them by throwing a veil over them. There are, then, two characters spoken of in the text from whom divine truth, in its reality, in its power, in its savour, in its sweetness, are mysteriously hidden. One of these characters bears the name of "wise". It is God's glory to pour contempt upon human wisdom, and to bring it to nought, to take the wise in their own craftiness, to lay low in the dust all that man idolizes, that man exalts himself in, and that man loves and adores. If there is one thing in our day more idolized than another, it is the wisdom of the creature. If there is one idol which the world lying in wickedness and the world lying in profession worship more than another always excepting Mammon, the great Bel before whom all fall down and worship, it is creature-wisdom. But this text of Scripture makes a direct stab at the vitals of creature-wisdom; it levels this idol prostrate in the dust; and as Dagon could not stand before the ark of the covenant, so human wisdom must fall prostrate before this declaration from the mouth of the Son of God, and become a stump.

1. But "the wise" in the text seem chiefly to be those who are seeking to become acquainted with divine truth by the exercise of their natural faculties. We are scarcely, I think, to understand by the word "wise" those who are worldly-wise, but those whom we may call religiously wise. As to the worldly-wise they interfere not in these matters; they leave the gospel to itself. It is beneath contempt in their estimation. It is altogether a thing so repulsive to their feeling, that they take no more notice of it than if it did not exist. And therefore the word "wise" here seems to point, not so much at those who are wise in this world's wisdom, but at those who seek

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to introduce worldly wisdom into the things of God, who seek to bring human reasoning to bear upon God's truth. God, then, has hidden divine realities, in their manifestation and power, from all who would introduce their fleshly wisdom into the things of God.

There are indeed certain things in religion which human wisdom can attain to. A man by reasoning upon evidences may be persuaded of the truth of revelation; by comparing Scripture with Scripture and bringing forward numerous texts, he may be fully persuaded, in his natural judgment, of the truths of the doctrine of grace. He may see election, predestination and all the doctrines connected with divine sovereignty, clearly revealed in Scripture, so as to give his most unwavering assent and consent to them. He may make many sacrifices in their behalf; he may hear no ministers but those that preach them; he may associate with no persons but those that profess them; he may write books in their defence; he may maintain the strongest arguments from the Word of God that they are true; yet live and die in perfect ignorance of them as made known to his soul by special revelation.

There is nothing which blinds men more effectually to the power of eternal things, than this introducing fleshly wisdom into divine truth; for a man most effectually deceives himself, when he is persuaded in his judgment of the doctrines of grace, and yet lacks that spiritual teaching, whereby those doctrines are brought home with divine unction and savour to his soul. He seems armed with an armour of proof against all the arrows of conviction; for he says, "I am no deceived Arminian; I profess no erroneous sentiments; my judgment is clear; I stand on the basis of truth; I understand perfectly what I hear from the pulpit; I believe most implicitly, that God has a peculiar people; I am fully persuaded that Christ died only for the elect;" and therefore, being compassed in this armour with which he has surrounded himself, not received from God's armoury, but provided from some human manufactory, he stands like the Leviathan in the book of Job; "He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble: he

laugheth at the shaking of a spear" Job 41:27,29; and the arrows of conviction caught by this defensive armour, glance off from him, and never touch or wound his conscience.

2. But we pass on to another character which is spoken of under the name of "prudent". This seems to be a character distinct from the wise. The prudent man is one who always shapes his course in the path which is most consistent with his worldly interests. "He is not a man of extremes," he says. He does not like any sort of profession which in any way interferes with his worldly prospects. He is a moderate man. He likes to steer, he says, the middle path between the two parties. He is not, he says, a man of high sentiments, nor is he a man of low sentiments. He will avoid with the utmost care professing any religious opinion which may bring him into any reproach; and will yet have an especial regard for his moral character, lest by that being tarnished he should suffer in the world's estimation. His object therefore is, to have just so much religion as shall pacify his conscience, just such a profession as shall lull any convictions that may arise, and yet escape the difficulties, trials, and sacrifices, which are the lot of the faithful followers of the Lamb. Thus, with the greatest ingenuity and the greatest caution, like the wriggling serpent, he will steer such a path as shall always preserve him from persecution, opposition, contempt, difficulty, and sacrifice; and yet he shall so keep from everything which may tarnish his character, that he shall gain, he thinks, the estimation of professors and yet preserve the good opinion of the world.

This is your prudent man—a man who says he is no narrow-minded bigot, no harsh judge of others, no exclusive narrow-spirited censor to condemn all who differ from him, but is a man of general philanthropy, of universal charity for all who profess religion, and that wishes to be friendly with all sects and parties, and indeed with everybody who is in any measure separated from the profanity of the day, and wears an aspect of serious religion. Such is a sketch of your prudent man. But he is one from whom God hides His truth. His very prudence is nothing else but

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the wisdom of the flesh. It springs, for the most part, from Satanic delusion. His very smooth and plausible language is but the out-pouring of a worldly heart, and all his gentleness and mildness is, in fact, nothing but an abhorrence of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the preference of self over the esteem of God, and it is the setting up of his own worldly interest and his own worldly character, as an idol to be bowed down to, instead of the cross of the Lord Jesus. With all his prudence, then, in the sight of God he is a fool, for he is destitute of that spiritual wisdom which maketh a man "wise unto salvation": and however adroitly he may shape his course, however dexterously he may direct his steps, he will find hell at the end. He may manoeuvre most cleverly upon earth, and escape everything that is repulsive to his carnal mind, but there is One whom he cannot escape, there is a judgment which is ripening for him, and the end of all his wisdom is death eternal.

3. But before we go on to consider what the things are that God hides from "the wise and prudent", we will look at another character spoken of in the text—"the babe". "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." There is a character, then, spoken of in the text which is the antipodes, the exact opposite of those which we have been describing; and yet one to whom the Lord graciously condescends to reveal those things which He hides from them. A babe, spiritually, is one that is brought by the operations of the Spirit of God upon his heart, into that posture, that experience of soul, that frame, of which the natural babe is a living, visible figure. The leading feature in a babe is that of helplessness.

Thus, the spiritual babe that is opposed to "the wise and prudent", is one, who, by the operations of the Spirit of God, in his heart and conscience, is brought to a state of helplessness before God. "The wise" could understand the truth by employing the powers of his natural intellect. "The prudent" could see how to steer between rocks on the one side, and sandbanks on the other, so as to preserve uninjured the bark that carried the cargo of his

own dear reputation. But the babe is helpless in this matter; he has no understanding to make use of to direct him into "the truth as it is in Jesus"; he has no prudence to employ, so to steer as to avoid the shipwreck of his good name; but he stands in divine matters utterly helpless. He feels that he has no power to lift up a little finger to deliver himself "from the wrath to come"—that he has not by nature in his heart an atom of that which is acceptable in God's sight—that he has no strength to raise up a single spiritual breathing after Jesus, no power to utter a word that God shall listen to with approbation, no wisdom to conceive one thought that shall be pleasing in His eyes. He stands in his feelings often upon the brink of perdition, and is no more able to roll himself away from the precipice that lies underneath him, than a person bound hand and foot by pirates and left on the brink of some sea-washed cliff, would be able to deliver himself from his fearful position, though trembling lest some movement of his body or some gust of wind should in a moment precipitate him into the sea that roars beneath.

But another striking feature of a babe, is that of ignorance. As it lies on its mother's lap, it is ignorant of the ways of the world, ignorant of the devices of man's heart, ignorant of every branch of all that knowledge which is necessary to fit it for the station of life which it may hereafter have to occupy. We come into the world ignorant of everything which it is necessary for us to know. Thus the spiritual babe, to carry out the figure, is one who is, at times, so deeply convinced of his own ignorance before God, that it seems to him as though he never knew a single truth aright, as though he were utterly destitute of divine teaching, as though he had not an atom of grace in his soul, as though he had never been spiritually led into the "truth as it is in Jesus," by the operations of the Holy Ghost upon his heart and conscience. He feels unable to direct himself in any path that lies before his eyes, unable experimentally to understand any one text of Scripture, unable spiritually to enter into any branch of the truth of God, unable to realise his personal interest in any one of those blessed truths, which are the consola-

tion of the Church of Christ.

But we need not limit the word “babe” to the age of infancy. We read Mt 21:15, of “children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David”. These could clearly speak and understand, in a measure, if not spiritually, at least naturally, that the Son of David was come into the temple. And yet the Lord calls them babes. “Have ye never read,” says He, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?” Thus taking the babe in the text as applicable to one somewhat advanced beyond infancy, we observe another marked feature in its character—its great teachability, the implicit credence that it gives to those in whose company it is, and who take upon them to instruct it. A babe that is able to understand what yon say, will receive with unhesitating confidence whatever falls from your lips. It has no idea that there are such things as lies, or such persons as deceivers; but it believes implicitly everything that is told it.

So with the spiritual babe, he is teachable. Very different from the worldly “wise”, who bring their carnal understandings to bear upon the truths of God: very different from “the prudent”, who can shape their winding course, so as to steer clear of everything that pains the flesh. The spiritual babe is made teachable, and as such, is often crying unto the Lord that He would apply His truth with power to his heart; is seeking wisdom from the lips of Him who alone can communicate it; knowing nothing in self as he ought to know, but seeking to derive all his spiritual knowledge from the mouth of Him into whose lips grace has been poured, earnestly desiring that he may know Jesus as his wisdom, as well as his righteousness.

The apostle says: “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” 1Co 3:18. This truth the spiritual babe has learned. He has felt in the hour of temptation, in the season of distress, that all human wisdom falls short of administering that relief, and giving him that support which he longs to feel. He is brought to realise what the Lord

speaks in Isa 28:9, "Whom shall He teach knowledge, and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." He is deeply convinced that unless the Lord Himself speaks by His own lips to his soul, brings truth by His own mighty operation into his heart, and seals His own testimony in his conscience by His own heavenly power, he continues ignorant of everything which he desires to know. And what the Lord does thus reveal and make known, he implicitly believes. However difficult, strange, and improbable it may seem, he believes it on the Lord's own authority, having a measure of the faith of Abraham, who believed the promise that he should have a son, in spite of reason, sense, and nature.

But it may be asked, how has the babe become possessed of these feelings? What has produced this frame and disposition of soul before God? Not the exertions of his own will surely, nor the strivings of his own creative energy; for a man has just as much power to make himself a babe naturally as a babe spiritually, and could just as easily "enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born", as regenerate himself into a new creature. But his frame of spiritual babeship arises from the Lord's revealing to him that everything in the creature is polluted, that all human wisdom is utterly defective, that nothing will stand in the great day of trial, but that which comes down from God Himself. And, therefore, the babe, being brought to this point in his soul, that there is no righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no wisdom but Christ's wisdom, no teaching but Christ's teaching, no salvation but in Christ's blood, no knowledge but in the application of truth to his soul, is made to feel, that so far only as he is indulged with these things, has he any saving acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus".

II. But we pass on to consider, what are the things that God hides from the one character, and makes known to the other.

1. The workings of godly fear in the soul, is a branch of divine truth which the Lord hides from "the wise and prudent", and reveals unto babes. Whatever religious knowledge, or whatever

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carnal wisdom, or whatever worldly prudence a man may be possessed of, if he is devoid of the life of God in his soul, he is destitute of the workings of godly fear, he has no solemn awe or reverence for Jehovah, he has never seen his sins in the light of God's countenance, he has never trembled at "the wrath to come", he has never prostrated himself with a reverential spirit before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, that sees into the secret recesses of his bosom. But all his knowledge, and all his wisdom, and all his prudence, leave him just where they found him, unimpressed, carnal, sensual, worldly, "dead in trespasses and sins". All his wisdom never reached beyond the surface: it never broke up the crust of unbelief, so as to enter through that seared crust into the conscience, and produce living effects in it, as made tender by the touch of God's finger. But his knowledge, his wisdom, his prudence, are all floating in his judgment, and never descend into the depths of his heart.

God hides, then, the workings of spiritual fear from those who are "wise and prudent". He does not condescend to manifest Himself to them: He does not show them light in His light: He does not reveal Himself to their consciences: He does not come with power into their hearts; He does not take the veil of unbelief and blindness from their carnal minds, and show them Himself; He takes them not where He took Moses, into the cleft of the rock, "where His glory passed by"; He deals not with them as He dealt with Isaiah, when He manifested to him the glory of the Lord in the temple; He discovers Himself not to them as He did to Job, when "he abhorred himself in dust and ashes". All their knowledge of God therefore, is an external, intellectual knowledge, a mere exercise of the faculties of the mind, without any spiritual teaching, or any special revelation of the presence, power, glory, and majesty of God to their consciences.

But the babe—the living babe in Zion has "the fear of the Lord" in his soul "as the beginning of wisdom". And therefore, having this fountain of life within, he has it springing up in spiritual exercises.

As the apostle speaks, "He serves God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" he dares not rush with presumption into His holy presence. When he comes into His sanctuary a solemn dread from time to time falls upon his spirit. He has the feelings of Isaiah Isa 6:5 when he cried: "I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" the feelings of Jacob when he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" Ge 28:17; the feelings of Moses when he stood by the burning bush, and put his shoes from off his feet, for the spot whereon he stood was holy ground: the feelings of the high priest in the temple on that mysterious day of atonement, when he entered alone, "not without blood", into the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and beheld the Shechinah—the divine presence as a cloud resting on the mercy-seat.

The babe, then, has these exercises of godly fear which carnal, unhumbled, worldly-wise professors know nothing of. And though the babe, at times, seems to have no religion which he can really call spiritual or which satisfies himself, yet he has that tenderness, awe, and reverence which the carnal professor, however high in doctrine, however soaring in vain confidence, is utterly unacquainted with.

2. But again; God hides from "the wise and prudent" a spiritual acquaintance with His law. They may have natural convictions I believe many of them have; they may see naturally that God is pure and holy; but they have no acquaintance in their consciences with the spirituality and depth of God's law in the hands of the Spirit, as a ministration of condemnation. If they had, it would have broken into pieces their fleshly wisdom. The hammer of God would have crushed into nothingness the prudence whereby they were endeavouring to shape their course. But the babe has a spiritual acquaintance with the depth and breadth and height of God's holy law, and this being in his conscience the ministration of condemnation, makes him cry: "Guilty, guilty; unclean, unclean; undone, undone; God be merciful unto me a sinner."

3. But again; the operations and exercises of living faith in a

tender conscience are hidden from “the wise and prudent”. All that they know, they “know” as Jude speaks, “naturally”, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, by the adjusting of different texts, and endeavouring to gather a light from bringing together passage with passage. They know nothing of the operations of living faith, whereby truth is received in power, in feeling, in divine application, in spiritual revelation; and thus being devoid of living faith, there are no exercises in their souls upon the perfections of God; no access as spiritual worshippers; no entrance into the mysteries of the gospel, in their sweetness and reality; no self-abhorrence and self-loathing, as the “chief of sinners”, and “less than the least of all saints”; no going forth in soul towards Jesus with earnest cries, breathings, longings, and desires to feel the efficacy of His atoning blood, the manifestations of His glorious righteousness, and the discovery of His all-absorbing presence. But they mistake light in the head for life in the heart, doctrines in the brain for the feeling application of truth to the conscience, the reception of what God has spoken in His Word into the intellect for the spiritual discovery of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” with power to the soul.

4. But further; God hides from “the wise and prudent” the exercise of a living hope. They know nothing of “the anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil”. Their hope is the hope of the hypocrite, which is to perish Job 8:13. It is the spider’s web spun from their own bowels; “they shall lean upon it, but it shall not endure”, as Bildad speaks in Job 8:15, for it is like the rush that has grown out of the mire, and like the flag that groweth up out of the water. But a good hope through grace; hope, that sister-grace with faith and love, that hope which is “the helmet of salvation” to cover the head in the day of battle, that hope of which the possessors shall never be ashamed, that spiritual hope in the soul which is raised up by the “God of hope”, and by which we are saved for “we are saved by hope”—of that spiritual hope the wise and worldly-prudent are utterly ignorant. They know nothing of storms, waves, tempests, gusts, shoals,

sand-banks and rocks, and therefore they want not an anchor. The anchor is not a useless implement, taken on shipboard for show like a figure-head, to be looked at and gazed upon as an ornament, but it is for use; and its use is, to keep the ship from being driven upon shoals and sand-banks, to preserve it from being utterly cast away. He, then, that is never exercised with doubts, fears, temptations, difficulties, gusts, storms, and tempests; who is never tossed upon the waves, nor driven by the billows, can know nothing of what it is to have an “anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and that entereth into that which is within the veil”.

5. Again; God hides the breathing forth of spiritual affections and the pouring out of divine love from “the wise and prudent,” which He reveals unto babes. The parent loves the babe. The mother will bow down over her infant as it lies on her lap, and with the fondest tenderness will imprint soft kisses upon its cheek, out of the love that springs up in her bosom toward it. The very prattlings and little actions of the babe are sweet in her eyes, because it is her offspring. She bestows not that love upon others; it is the babe, the fruit of her own womb, that she loves. So the God of all grace, the Father of His dear family, never bestows His love upon any but the elect; He never sheds abroad heavenly affections in any but hearts which He is preparing for glory; He never gives a foretaste of heavenly bliss, or the dewdrops of eternal consolation, except to those whom He has loved in Christ before all worlds. Never did His love—no, not a drop of it—fall into the heart of “the wise and prudent”.

God beholdeth the proud afar off, and “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;” but into the heart of the helpless, ignorant, teachable babe, that lies at His feet in brokenness, contrition, simplicity, humility, and godly sorrow, He drops His love, because, being its Father, He loves it with a love that reaches from eternity to eternity, a love that knows no beginning and will never know end, a love that runs in one undeviating channel, that embraces all the elect, a love that knows neither height nor depth, bottom nor

shore. He reveals, then, His love in a measure to the babes, by communicating out of His loving bosom some drops of that love into their heart; and when that love is communicated it makes them love in return.

6. But again; He hides from “the wise and prudent” all the savour, and unction, and dew, and sweetness, and power of truth. He gives them the letter. When He has cracked the nut for His child, He throws the shell into the street, and the worldly-wise pick up the broken nutshell out of the gutter, and are wonderfully pleased with it. All they can see is the shell of truth; but the marrow, the fatness, the sweet enjoyment, the blessed revelation, the honey, the milk, and the wine of gospel truth—these things God hides from them; and it is this which distinguishes the living from the dead, that the living have a measure of power in their hearts.

Dew, and savour, and fragrance, and divine sweetness, and heavenly power accompany truth to the hearts of the elect, so that the teaching of God drops like the rain, and His speech distils like the dew. He leadeth them into green pastures, and causeth them to lie down by still waters. He says, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;” “I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.” And when He comes into His garden He brings with Him milk, and honey, and wine, so that the babe is fed by the milk of the gospel. “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” And it is the power of truth felt in the conscience, and the sweet application of divine testimonies received into the heart, that nurture up the spiritual babe until he grows up into “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”.

7. But again; the diversified and chequered path of a Christian—the ins and outs of the divine life, the liftings up and castings down, the bitter exercises and sweet deliverances, the scenes of darkness and glimpses of light, the cries and groanings of the troubled spirit, and the lifting up of “the light of God’s countenance”—this chequered path, this varied scene, is hid from “the wise and prudent”. They know nothing of distress, and nothing of

joy; nothing of war, and nothing of peace; nothing of despair, and nothing of hope; nothing of sinking, and nothing of rising; nothing of frowns, and nothing of smiles; nothing of long seasons of darkness, and nothing of blessed gleamings forth of light. God hides these things from them—a veil is upon their hearts. The Lord has, as He speaks of the Jews, “blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they should be converted, and He should heal them”; and “therefore wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”. But to the babe He condescends, in a measure, to reveal those things; and through them Christ becomes his food, and soul-satisfying portion.

Thus the babe will ever stand distinguished from the “wise” and the worldly “prudent”. The “wise” may seem to know more than the babe; but, in fact, he knows far less, for he knows nothing by divine teaching. What the babe knows, he knows savingly. The wise may seem stronger than the babe, because he has a greater acquaintance with the Scriptures of truth; but in reality the babe is far stronger than he, for the strength of Christ is made perfect in his weakness; whereas “the mighty man shall not glory in his might”, for “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong”; but some temptation shall come upon him to thrust him effectually down. The carnally wise professor may seem to have a stronger hope, a firmer faith, a brighter evidence, a clearer testimony than the babe; but what is it all? It only stands in the letter of truth, it does not stand in the application of the Holy Ghost; it is not a part of that kingdom of God which is “not in word but in power”; it does not stand in the Spirit’s testimony; it is not the religion that Paul describes when he says, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

God is said to reveal them unto babes—that is, He makes them spiritually known, He casts a mysterious light upon them, He communicates life out of them, He brings feeling with them, He sends them home with spiritual power, He testifies by the Spirit’s application, and seals them upon the heart in a way of divine manifes-

tation. And thus the things He hides from the “wise and prudent” He reveals unto babes.

Can you see your character traced out, friends? Your character is here, whether you know it or not. Here is your mirror; if the veil is over your heart you may not be able to see your features in it, but here the mirror is, if you can read your features. If you are a professor of vital godliness, you are one of these characters—the worldly wise, the prudent, or the babe. I have endeavoured, as far as the Lord has shown me, to delineate your features. Is there a resemblance? Now, if you have a conscience, you will fall under the power of truth—you will say, “I fear I have too much worldly wisdom, and too little spiritual teaching. Looking back upon my life, casting my eyes upon my daily transactions, I see there is much more worldly prudence stamped upon them than spiritual simplicity. Weighing myself up in the strict balance of God’s Word, I see much that condemns me, I see little that seems really to testify in my favour.” Such will be the voice of conscience, for the babe has a conscience, and it is an essential part of the Spirit’s work to give him a conscience, whereby he falls under the power of truth.

But some shall say, “I am so possessed with a feeling of my helplessness, my ignorance, my nothingness, my sinfulness, and deep pollution, and, at the same time, the Lord seems to have done so little for me, and to have revealed so little of the sweetness and power of truth in my soul, that I fear I am out of the secret altogether.” Has the Lord made your heart in any measure honest before Him? Has He planted in your soul anything like godly fear, so as to bring you into His presence with feelings of solemn reverence? Has He shown to you how short of salvation everything is but His own blessed teachings and His own divine manifestations in your soul? And has He kindled in your heart, at times, an earnest “spirit of grace and of supplications,” whereby you are crying unto Him to lead you and to guide you into all truth? Now these are symptoms of life. Whilst I would wish to pull down “the mighty from their seats”, I would seek to exalt “the humble and weak”. I would not

wish to distress any tender conscience, any living soul, not even the weakest of God's family, but I could not discharge my conscience unless I took the precious from the vile, and drew a line of distinction between the clean and the unclean, though I know that none but God can make His own word effectual to the separation of the professor from the possessor, and set apart spiritual children from those that are "at ease in Zion".

25 SPIRITUAL TIMES AND SEASONS

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening,

8th July, 1841

"A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

Eccl. 3:3, 4

What an instance is King Solomon of the vanity of all creature enjoyments, and the emptiness of all creature attainments! The wisest of mankind, and yet often doing actions of which a fool might be ashamed! Speaking, by divine inspiration, in the Proverbs, the language of most blessed instruction, and yet in conduct violating well nigh every precept which he had given, and acting in direct opposition to every proverb which he had inculcated! Seated in peace upon the throne of his father David, enjoying every pleasure which wealth could minister, supplied with every gratification that his senses could delight in, and then forced in his old age to write "vanity and vexation of spirit" upon them all! In his declining years reaping the bitter fruits of backsliding from God, and giving to us in this book of Ecclesiastes which appears to be the expression of his repentance his own dearly-bought experience of the utter vanity and instability of all creature enjoyments and expectations, and brought to see that there was nothing worth having but the fear of the Lord in the heart in blessed exercise, and the testimony of God

in the soul!

Now, in this diversified experience through which King Solomon passed, he learned lessons which were not to be arrived at through any other channel. It was not in vain that he had every gratification presented to his carnal mind; it was not in vain that "he made himself gardens and orchards," and "gat him men-singers and women-singers," that "whatsoever his eyes desired he kept not from them, and withheld not his heart from any joy;" for "he looked on all the works that his hands had wrought, and on the labour that he had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccl. 2:5, 8; Eccl. 2:10, 11). He has thus set up a beacon that we might, with God's blessing, avoid the shoals on which he struck; a light-house blazes forth, that we might not fall foul on the sands on which his frail bark too often ran; and thus, the Spirit of God sealing the instruction upon our souls, that we might steer clear of those reefs which the Holy Ghost has traced out by his pen in this chart of his perilous navigation.

Let no one misunderstand me. I believe that Solomon was a gracious character, and that he is now in glory; but the Lord left him to do many things which showed plainly that he was but a man, and which clearly prove that he was not able to act up to the lessons of divine wisdom which he taught. And he is a striking instance how that, placed as he was in an eminent situation, and not being kept by the grace of God from the many temptations to which his very wealth and station exposed him, he was carried away by them to the future distress of his soul. But in this chequered path of experience he learned a lesson, the fruit of which is recorded in this chapter, that "the times and the seasons the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7).

Solomon's experience gave the free-will that lurked in his bosom a fatal stab, turned upside down the wisdom of the creature, broke into a thousand shivers all his fleshly righteousness, and convinced him deeply of the sovereignty of God reigning over all

his purposes, words, and works. And therefore, as the fruit of this wisdom, which was communicated through the channel of personal experience, he came to this solemn conclusion, that “for everything there was a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;” that these times are in the hands of God; not to be precipitated, not to be retarded; not depending upon the movements of the creature; not fluctuating with the restless tide of human will and purpose, but fixed in the sovereign decrees of Jehovah, and fulfilled at such a moment and in such a manner as it pleaseth Him “who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11).

But the chief point to which I wish, with God’s blessing, to call your attention this evening, is that portion of experimental truth which is set forth in the words of the text.

The work of grace upon the soul may be divided into two distinct operations of the Spirit of God upon the heart; the one is to break down the creature into nothingness and self-abasement before God; the other is to exalt the crucified Jesus as “God over all, blessed for ever,” upon the wreck and ruin of the creature. And these two lessons distinct, and yet so far combined as to tend to one centre—the glory of God in the salvation of the soul the blessed Spirit writes with power upon every quickened vessel of mercy. “A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

i There is, then, “a time to kill”—that is, there is an appointed season in God’s eternal counsels when the sentence of death is to be known and felt in the consciences of all His elect. That time cannot be hurried, that time cannot be delayed. All the counsel of parents, all the advice of instructors, all the sermons of gospel ministers, all the reading of religious books cannot hurry forward that time; and all the wretched recklessness and profaneness of our base hearts, all the snares and temptations that Satan is continually seeking to entangle the feet in, all the desperate pride, pre-

sumption, hypocrisy, unbelief, and self-righteousness of the carnal mind have no power to retard that time. The hands of that clock, of which the will of God is the spring, and His decrees the pendulum, are beyond the reach of human fingers to move on or put back.

But we observe from the text that the killing precedes the healing, and that the breaking down goes before the building up; that the elect weep before they laugh, and mourn before they dance. In this track does the Holy Spirit move; in this channel do His blessed waters flow. The first “time” then of which the text speaks is that season when the Holy Ghost takes them in hand in order to kill them. And how does He kill them? By applying with power to their consciences the spirituality of God’s holy law, and thus bringing the sentence of death into their souls—the Spirit of God employing the law as a ministration of condemnation to cut up all creature righteousness.

Every vessel of mercy must experience more or less of this killing work in his conscience. God has not indeed, in His Word, fixed any certain mode in which the sword shall enter a man’s heart, but He has said positively and decisively that there is “a time to kill”. This must be understood spiritually and experimentally, unless we believe that any “time” can legalise murder. Nay, the very words that follow, “a time to heal,” prove that spiritual, not natural, killing is intended. The killed soul can be healed, but not the killed body. But if none are spiritually healed before they are spiritually killed, and if none shall see “the Sun of righteousness” but those upon whom He “arises with healing in His wings,” every vessel of mercy, according to the depth of the Spirit’s work in his heart, must know what it is to have the sentence of death and condemnation take place in his conscience.

But some shall say, “How am I to know whether I have been spiritually killed?” I will tell you. Have you experienced the effects of death? When we see a corpse lying in a coffin, it is not a question with us whether it is living or dead, for we see the pallid features of death stamped upon it. Thus it is with the elect of God. Do you

want to know whether you have been killed? Have you experienced the fruits and effects of that killing? Has death been stamped upon your own righteousness? Has the sentence of guilt and condemnation fallen with weight and power into your conscience? Have you seen nothing in self to deliver you from "the wrath to come?" Have you stood before the bar of God an arraigned and guilty criminal? Have you gone to Him, as the six citizens of Calais went before our Edward III, with a halter round your neck, waiting only for the sentence of execution to drop from the mouth of the king? Has all your comeliness been turned into corruption, so that the steam of putrefaction has come up into your nostrils, and you have been in the valley of Hamon-Gog? (Ezek. 39:11).

These are the fruits and effects of death. I believe we are to measure our experience of this spiritual death, not so much by the way in which we have died, as by what fruits and effects have been felt in our souls. Now you must know very well whether, when you come before God, you come before Him as a guilty criminal or an accepted child; whether you call upon Him as having the sentence of condemnation in your heart, or as having the sweet voice of the blood of Jesus speaking in you better things than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24). You must know, if you will be but honest with yourself, whether in solemn moments you expect hews doom as your portion, or the realms of eternal light, peace, and love. You must know whether you are labouring under the "spirit of bondage," or enjoying some measure of blessed liberty; whether in your solemn approaches to God you see anger and wrath in His countenance, and tremble under His frowns, or whether you bask beneath His approving smiles. These are matters of conscience; these are things in experience which cannot be wrapped up, blinked at and evaded by a living soul.

Everyone quickened into spiritual tenderness of heart must have an inward witness that he is on one side of the line or the other. A living man whose religion moves only as the Spirit moves, and whose "faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the pow-

er of God,” is not to be hoodwinked and blindfolded, and led away from inward teachings into uncertainties. The man who has any experience at all cannot get away from that which takes place in those secret chambers, because conscience, though it has a still voice, can neither be bribed into a false verdict, nor overawed into mute acquiescence; though it only speaks inwardly, it speaks with authority; though like Him who is the Author of it, it lifts not up its voice in the streets, yet it secretly bears an inward testimony, which must be heard and submitted to. If you, then, feel a poor, guilty, wretched criminal, condemned to die, one that sees no hope of escape from “the wrath to come” through creature-righteousness, but one that stands self-condemned and self-aborred before the bar of the most righteous God—know this, if you feel these things, if you sigh and groan and cry under the heavy burden of them, that “the sword has pierced through your own heart also,” and that you have experienced “a time to kill”.

But it is not merely man’s righteousness that God means to kill, but also man’s pride. O cursed pride, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride, that would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride, that would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself! Pride, that can feed upon the letter of truth as well as upon garbage! Pride, that can wrap up itself in the monk’s cowl and flaunt abroad in the attire of the harlot! Pride, that can soar aloft to the heights of creature-holiness, and wallow in the filthy kennel of impurity! That monstrous creature within us, of such ravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves, and “enlargeth its desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied” (Hab. 2:5). Pride, that chameleon which assumes every colour, that actor which can play every part, and yet which is constant to no one object or purpose but to exalt and glorify self!

There is, then, “a time to kill” pride. And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man’s pride! How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal

poverty, that He may make a stab at his worldly pride! How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his self-righteous pride! How He will suffer sin to break forth, if not openly, yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions shall kill his spiritual pride! And what deep discoveries of internal corruption, what a breaking up of “the fountains of the great deep,” what a leading into the chambers of imagery will the Lord sometimes employ to dig down to the root, and cut off the fibres of that poisonous tree-pride! The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes this inbred evil, cuts down to it through the quivering and bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its multiplied windings and ramifications.

But there is “a time to kill” not only a man’s pride, but also his wisdom; to slaughter it, and, as it were, drain away the life-blood from it. How delusively does this fleshly wisdom of ours act, in endeavouring to substitute the mere knowledge of truth in the letter, for the teachings of God in the soul! And how many are deceived in various ways by leaning to their own wisdom, instead of feeling fools before God, and looking up to Him for His blessed instruction! But the Lord will effectually kill creature-wisdom in the hearts of His people, by bringing them into those straits and difficulties, into those sharp and severe exercises, into those bitter and distressing temptations; where all human reasoning gives up the ghost, where knowledge and understanding are baffled and confounded, and the arm of the creature is so palsy-stricken that it cannot take any one promise out of the Word of God, to administer comfort to the troubled soul.

“I will destroy,” says the Lord, “the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Cor. 1:19, 20); The wise man is not to “glory in his wisdom” (Jer. 9:23), but glory in it he will until it is killed, and he learns, at the knife’s point, that the Lord “turneth wise men backward, and maketh

their knowledge foolish” (Isa. 44:25). The best lessons are learnt in affliction. A man never learns anything to profit while standing upon a lofty mountain. It is in the valley of humiliation, it is in seasons of distress, trouble, anxiety, perplexity, and temptation, that a man learns the secrets of heavenly wisdom, for in them he learns his own folly, and that “the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6).

ii But it is not all killing work. If God kills His people it is to make them alive (1 Sam. 2:6); if He wounds them, it is that He may heal; if He brings down, it is that He may lift up. We cannot see it at the time. I have thought when I was in perplexity of soul, that I never should see what it was for; and I have almost told God so. It was impossible to see the object intended. Such a cloud of pitchy darkness lowered over it, that I felt in my own mind convinced that I never should be brought to see the reason of the dispensation. But I have been brought to see the reason, and to view the merciful kindness of God in bringing me into those straits and difficulties, wherein He caused the sighs and groans of my heart to ascend to His holy ears. But when we are passing under these exercises, we seem as though we could almost dare to tell God to His face, that even He Himself cannot bring good out of them—as though the matter was too crooked even for His arm to make straight. Such poor wretches are we when left to ourselves!

But there is “a time to heal;” and until the time comes as appointed in the mind of God, there is no effectual healing. We may seek to the physicians, like Asa when he was diseased in his feet (2 Chr. 16:12); we may go and beg some plaister from our friends; may creep under the wing of some minister; may endeavour to persuade ourselves we have received some comfort; may try to treasure up in our bosoms some text; may attempt to act faith upon some promise; may do our best to convince ourselves that we have been cured—and yet the old leprosy breaks out again. After all these make-believes, we do but resemble a credulous patient who has resorted to a quack for some deep-seated disease, and whose

complaint bursts forth more violently when the temporary stimulus of the high-sounding nostrum has ceased. He then finds every symptom aggravated, and sinks deeper into despondency, because the remedy which promised to cure has increased the malady.

And so if the Lord has really smitten you with disease, all your quack remedies will fail, and you will be ready at times, like the poor lunatic in Bedlam, to tear off the plaisters that men would put upon you, because they only irritate you. You feel, at times, as though you would away with them all, crying aloud, "Miserable comforters are ye all" and "physicians of no value". Doctrines you see clearly in the Bible, but they afford no relief to you; promises suitable to your case, but they bring no consolation to you; children of God walking in the enjoyment of sweet manifestations, but they cannot communicate their comfort to you; ministers tracing out your experience, but the Spirit of God does not bless it to you; preachers and teachers setting forth Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, but He does not manifest Himself as an all-sufficient Saviour to you.

And so you go on, fearing that the time will never come when the Lord will drop a word of consolation into your soul; believing yourself to be some wretched character who has been thrust into a profession you know not how, and that the day will come when you will be manifested as a hypocrite; crying to the Lord for some blessed testimony, and He never speaking one word; endeavouring to find your experience in the Scriptures of truth, and yet such a veil over the Bible that you are unable to realise anything sweet and savoury there. And yet unable to give up your religion. Trying to throw it away, yet it coming back again; going away distressed and grieved from chapel, and saying, "Oh, I will never go there again; I never get the least comfort to my soul," and yet unable to stay away, as being more miserable at home than you would be there. But you cannot hasten the time. "The times and the seasons the Father has put in His own power" (Acts 1:7). But when the time comes to favour Zion none on earth or in hell can keep back that time, any

more than they can prevent the sun from rising.

There is, then, "a time to heal". And how is that healing effected? By some sweet discovery of mercy to the soul, by the eyes of the understanding being enlightened to see Jesus, and by the Holy Ghost raising up a measure of faith in the heart, whereby Christ is laid hold of, embraced in the affections, testified to by the Spirit, and enthroned within as "the hope of glory". Not that I believe all the children of God have the same clear and striking deliverance. Not that I believe that all the living family can speak with equal decision and equal certainty how Christ was made precious to them. We often read in the accounts that gracious men have given of the Lord's dealings with their souls, and hear ministers speak from the pulpit of very clear and marked deliverances. These are shining characters in the Church of God; their experience is a blessed testimony, and their sweet enjoyments and heavenly consolations are highly to be coveted; but I believe the generality of God's children are not so powerfully and blessedly delivered, as to be able, at all times, to make it out to their own satisfaction, that they have been delivered from going down into the pit. But still there has been an indescribable sensation of pardon and peace dropped into their hearts; there has been a transient visitation of mercy, like a cloud that passes hastily over the sky, and lets fall a refreshing shower, which, for a moment, cools the air, makes the flowers exhale fragrance, hangs the dew-drops upon every sparkling blade, and causes the grass to spring up with fresh verdure; but the next day comes, the shower is dried up, the flowers droop their heads, the grass is parched and withered, and every object seems to labour under the renewed heat; so passing and so transient was the cloud in its effects.

And thus with some of the living family who have received some testimony from the Lord. His favour, like the cloud of the latter rain, was so short and so transient that though it was accompanied with real gospel effects, though the dew-drops of mercy sparkled a while, yet they were soon dried up by the sun of tempta-

tion, soon exhaled by the winds that blew upon them from the four comers of the earth. And it is this speedy dissipation of enjoyment, this rapid drying up of the dew which makes many of God's people anxiously and seriously to question whether the consolation came from heaven or not.

But all through the Christian's life there will be "a time to kill, and a time to heal". We sometimes read in books, and hear in conversation, an experience of this kind—a work of grace commencing with very powerful convictions of sin, and the soul brought almost to the very brink of hell, and then a wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ, a powerful application of His atoning blood to the conscience, and a blessed manifestation of God's love to the soul. And then what follows? If we can credit their account, and they are not deceiving us, or not deceiving themselves, or if we do not misunderstand their statements, they possess an unwavering assurance during the remainder of their sojourning upon earth. Sin and Satan never distress nor wound them; the flesh lies calm and tranquil, like the summer sea, never lashed up by angry gusts into a storm of fretfulness and rebellion; the sea-birds of doubt and fear never flit with screams around them, as harbingers of a tempest, but the gale of divine favour gently fills their sail, and wafts them along till they reach the harbour of endless rest. Is this consistent with the Scriptures of truth?

Does not the Word of God set forth the path of a Christian as one of trial and temptation? Can a living soul ever pass through many scenes without being killed experimentally in his feelings as one of "the flock of slaughter?" Does not a chequered experience run through the whole of a Christian's life? Does the Scripture ever afford us the least warrant to believe that a man can be walking in the footsteps of a tempted, suffering Lord, who continues for months and years together at ease in Zion, without any trouble, exercise, grief, or distress in his soul? David never was there. Jeremiah never was there. Paul never was there. Heman never was there. Asaph never was there. You will find that no saints of God, whose

experience is left on record in the Bible, ever were there; but their path was one of change and vicissitude; sometimes down, sometimes up, sometimes mourning, sometimes rejoicing, but never long together in one unvaried spot.

The Spirit of the Lord, in carrying on this grand work in the hearts of God's people, will be continually operating in two distinct ways upon their souls. Jeremiah was a prophet of the Lord, and we read he was "set over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down," thus ran one part of his commission; "to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10)—that was the second part of his office. These two distinct operations were to run through the whole of his mission; they were "the burden of the Lord," laid upon him at his first call to the prophetic office, and they continued during the whole of his ministry, a space of more than forty years. Did he, then, merely on one occasion pull down, and on one occasion build up? Was not the whole of his ministration, as evidenced in the prophecies that are contained in the book that bears his name, a continual pulling down with one hand, and building up with the other? So is it then with the ministration of the Spirit of the Lord in a vessel of mercy. He is continually killing, continually healing, continually casting down, continually raising up, now laying the soul low in the dust of self-abasement, and now building it up sweetly in Christ.

iii But we pass on to another time—"a time to break down". The expression, "break down," implies that there is a building to be overthrown. What building is this? It is that proud edifice which Satan and the flesh have combined to erect in opposition to God, the Babel which is built up with bricks and lime, to reach the topmost heaven. But there is a time in God's hand to break down this Babel which has been set up by the combined efforts of Satan and our own hearts. Have we not all in our various ways set up some beloved idol, something which engaged our affections, something which occupied our thoughts, something to which we devoted all the energies of our minds, something for which we were willing

to labour night and day? Be it money, be it power, be it the esteem of men, be it respectability, be it worldly comfort, be it literary knowledge, there was a secret setting up of self in one or more of its various forms, and a bowing down to it as an idol. The man of business makes money his god. The man of pleasure makes the lust of the flesh his god. The proud man makes his adored self his god. The Pharisee makes self-righteousness his god. The Arminian makes free-will his god. The Calvinist makes dry doctrine his god. The Antinomian makes the perversion of Scripture truth his god. All in one way or other, however they may differ in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in this—that they give a preference in their esteem and affection to their peculiar idol above the one true God of Israel.

There is, then, a “time to break down” these idols which our fallen nature has set up. And have not we experienced some measure of this breaking down, both externally and internally? Have not our idols been in a measure smashed before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air, our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes? And so as to our religion, has it not been broken down together with the things of the world? Our good opinion of ourselves, our piety and holiness, our resting upon texts of Scripture, our setting up our memory, our hanging upon the opinion of others, our wisdom and our knowledge, our understanding and our abilities, our consistency and uprightness, have they not all been broken down, and made a heap of ruins before our eyes, so that we are brought into this spot, not to have one stone upon the other which stands in its old place?

But there is “a time to break down”. The time cannot be delayed, the time cannot be hurried. You may sit under the most heart-searching ministers, but you will not be effectually broken down, until the Lord Himself breaks you down. You may be hug-

ging yourself in prosperity and ease, and saying, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire" (Isa. 44:16), and thus be "walking in the sparks of your own kindling;" but when the gust of the Lord's anger blows out this temporary flame, you will not have "a sherd to take fire from the hearth" (Isa. 30:14). You may think that you have passed through it sufficiently, and that there needs no repetition of the work of destruction and demolition; but if you are one of God's children, you will have to be broken again and again both outwardly and inwardly, in your prospects, your expectations, and your idolatries, as well as in your frame and spirit before God.

You will never have any sweet communion with Jesus till your heart is broken to receive Him as a brokenhearted Lord. You will never have any tenderness and sympathy with a dying Saviour till your spirit is made contrite within you, so as to see and believe in an agonising Jesus. But when you are passing through these exercises, you seem not to have a grain of religion, not any one thing in your soul of which you can say, "This is the work of the Lord; I am sure I am a child of God; I feel the Spirit of adoption in me; I have a testimony which the devil himself cannot contradict—here is a sweet Ebenezer which I can look at with the greatest pleasure, and see that it was set up by God Himself in my soul. "No," say you, "what I once thought religion, I have come now to see was no religion at all. What I once highly esteemed I now look upon with disgust. What I once could lean upon, and prop up my soul with, and think would take me safe into eternity, I now see was only the deceits of the flesh and the delusion of Satan. Of all my sins my profession seems to be the greatest. I can look upon the street-pacing harlot, and think her nearer the kingdom of God than me. I can look upon those who are living in open profanity, and feel that their sins are not equal to mine: for I have been a presumptuous professor; I have touched the holy things of God with unholy hands. I have been thought more highly of by the people of God than there was any reason. I have gone amongst the family of God, have become a member of the church, and partaken of the

ordinance. I have been looked upon as a child of God, and now I fear that I had not one grain of true religion, not one spark of vital godliness. And oh! my case seems to be so much more awful than that of any person of whom I have ever heard or read, that I tremble at times lest the wrath of God should be let loose, and the hurricanes of His fury sweep me into hell.

Now these are some of the feelings of a broken-down soul. Were you ever there? Was your lofty religion ever thus smashed? Did God Himself ever step forth into your hearts, and turn all your comeliness into corruption? I do not mean to say that all are broken down into the same depths of self-abasement, but you know nothing of being built up, unless you have been in a measure broken down; for the “time to break down” precedes the “time to build up.”

There is, then, “a time to build up,” but God will never put His glorious temple upon a rotten foundation. Who would think of building a palace upon the walls of a hovel? Who would put beautiful columns of marble, and all the splendid ornaments of the residence of a king, beside a pauper’s cottage? Shall such a wretched hut deface and defile the royal palace? Sweep it away: remove it out of sight—it is an eyesore to the king. So with our pauper-religion, our hovel of self-righteousness, our hut of creature-wisdom and creature-strength. It must be taken down, removed out of sight, and utterly swept away. That is what God does to our creature-religion. I trust God has done something of it to my religion; and that makes me so earnest in pulling down other people’s religion, as seeing how easily the devil has been able to blind me in times past; and knowing what delusions and devices I could rest upon, before the Lord brought me down, it makes me stretch forth my hand as the blind and fettered Samson, and lay hold of the pillars of the temple of creature-righteousness, that I may pull it down upon the heads of the worshippers of that idol.

(iv) There is “a time to build up.” This building up is wholly and solely in Christ, under the blessed Spirit’s operations. But what

building up can there be in Christ, except the creature is laid low? What has Jesus, as an all-sufficient Saviour, to do with one who can stand in his own strength and his own righteousness? Such a one wants not Jesus Christ; He is only a nominal Saviour to him; he merely sees Christ in the Bible; he has only some dim speculation floating in his mind; but as to any experimental manifestation of Jesus to his soul, or any sweet communion with Him by the revelation of His love, he knows it not; nor can he know anything of Jesus experimentally, until he is brought into those exercises of soul to which, and to which alone, Christ is suitable.

But the Holy Ghost, when He has broken down a man's religion, begins to "build up," and as His covenant office is to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul, He will only build him up by giving him a sight of Jesus; by showing him that all saving religion from first to last stands in an experimental acquaintance with Christ, that all his righteousness is in Christ, that all his acceptance is in Christ, that all his wisdom comes out of Christ, that all that he spiritually is in time, and all that he will be in eternity, springs out of an eternal union with Christ.

When, then, He raises up a sweet persuasion in a man's conscience that he has an interest in Christ, when He brings into the heart one soft whisper that he stands complete in Christ, He builds him up. The temple rises up in a moment; it is not laboriously put together. It is not like the ancient temple, which was the work of many years to raise, and was put together stone by stone, though "neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, was heard in the house while it was in building" (1 Kin. 6:7). But the moment that God the Holy Ghost discovers the Lord of the temple, the temple rises to receive and lodge Him at once in all its fair proportions and complete harmony.

When the soul is built up in Christ, it wants no other religion but to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. It wants no other righteousness to recommend it to God, it wants no other salvation, nor title to eternal bliss. It wants no other hope but that

which Jesus sweetly communicates; no other faith but that which He blessedly gives; no other love but that which He deigns to shed abroad. Being crucified with Christ, Christ lives in him; and the sum and substance of his religion is to live by the faith of the Son of God. The religion of the Holy Ghost is for us to be brought to enjoy the sweet testimony that we are Christ's, and that Christ is ours. And then, through the feeling effects of it in our souls, to be laid low in our own eyes, to be abased in our own sight, to have our consciences made tender and sprinkled from guilt and filth, and to spend our breath in praising and blessing His holy name.

But what a different way of building up this is from being built up in the Arminian method on the one hand, or the dead Calvinistic mode on the other! The Arminian says, "You must pray, strive, and do your best; you must be active in God's cause; you must go about collecting money for the missionaries; you must be up and doing; and so in some way or other make yourself fit to receive the grace of God." The dry Calvinist says, "Away with your doubts and fears, we will have none of that rubbish. Where do you find hope in the Bible? Believers are to rejoice always, and have done with sighs and groans. The gospel is all liberty and peace. Christ is everything, all in all—and therefore away with all your rubbish of experience." So that the Arminian on the one hand pulls down the work of Christ to substitute creature-righteousness; and the dry Calvinist on the other pulls down the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul to build up a nominal Christ.

But the way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness, and crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing, so as to press out of it everything on which the creature can depend. Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abcess, and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough cure; so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it. And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by pouring in the balmy blood

of Jesus, as that which, by its application, cleanseth from all sin.

But, as was observed before, this breaking down and building up run parallel with a Christian's life. As pride rises, it must be broken down. As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low. As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate. So that the work of the Spirit, continually going on in the conscience of a living soul, is breaking down and building up, breaking down and building up, breaking down and building up. When we are low, He will give us a lift; when we are high, He will pull us down; when we are secretly exalting ourselves, He will give us such a sight of our awful depravity and corruption, as shall lay us in the dust; when we are full of guilt and self-condemnation, He will sometimes raise us up by a discovery of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. So that the Spirit of the Lord, carrying on His twofold operation in the hearts and consciences of God's children, will keep breaking down when needful, and building up when needful; and thus, in His own time and way, fits them for Jesus, as well as fills their souls with the love of Jesus.

(v) But there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Does a man only weep once in his life? Does not the time of weeping run, more or less, through a Christian's life? Does not mourning run parallel with his existence in this tabernacle of clay? for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Then "a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up," must run parallel with a Christian's life, just as much as "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Living souls will know many times to weep; they will have often to sigh and cry over their base hearts; to mourn with tears of godly sorrow their backslidings from God; to weep over their broken idols, faded hopes, and marred prospects; to weep at having so grieved the Spirit of God by their disobedience, carnality, and worldliness; to be melted into contrition at the feet of a dying Lord, so as in some measure to be led into the path

in which Jesus walked as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

They will have to bewail the falling off of those friends whom once they looked upon as bidding fairer for the kingdom of God than themselves; to weep at the cruel arrows of calumny which are shot against them by professors; to mourn over the low state of Zion, how few there are who really serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and adorn the doctrine in all things. But above all things will they have to weep over the inward idolatries of their filthy nature; to weep that they ever should have treated with such insult that God whom they desire to love and adore; that they should so neglect and turn their backs upon that Saviour who crowns them with lovingkindness and tender mercies; and that they bear so little in mind the instruction that has been communicated to them by the Holy Spirit.

There is many a weeping time for God's children; and if there be one frame of mind in soul experience more to be coveted than another, it is to be weeping at Jesus' feet. We have two sweet instances of the Lord's manifesting Himself to those who were weeping—one to “the woman which was a sinner,” who stood behind Him, and washed His feet with her tears; the other was to Mary Magdalene, who “stood without at the sepulchre weeping.” Oh, how different is the weeping, chastened spirit of a living soul from the hardened, seared presumption of a proud professor! How different are the feelings of a broken-hearted child of God from the lightness, the frivolity, the emptiness, and the worldliness of hundreds who stand in a profession of religion! How different is a mourning saint, weeping in his solitary corner over his base backslidings, from a reckless professor who justifies himself in every action, who thinks sin a light thing, and who, however inconsistently he acts—never feels conscience wounded thereby. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).

But there is “a time to laugh”—not carnally, not with vain mirth and frivolity; the Spirit of God does not mean that, but to

laugh as Sarah laughed, when she had on her lap the infant Isaac; to laugh as Hannah, when her countenance was no more sad; to laugh as those whose “mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing,” when “the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion” (Ps. 126:1, 2) to laugh as one who has seen the tricks and stratagems of his enemy defeated.

This spiritual laughter is not one of unholy levity, but such as the Lord Himself intended, when He said, “Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh” (Luke 6:21). Spiritual laughter is to laugh inwardly in response to the smile of God; to laugh at seeing Satan baffled, and his temptations overthrown; to laugh at seeing that the way in which the Lord has led us, though it was a mystery to ourselves, has been a way most glorifying to Him.

Oh, how different is this inward laughter of the spirit from the outward laughter of the face! How different is it to laugh thus in some secret corner from exciting the smiles of a congregation, or laughing at some droll event through carnality and lightness of heart! Of carnal laughter and jocund merriment Solomon truly said that “it is mad”—the Eccl. 2:2 hysteric laugh of the lunatic. But to be secretly smiling because the Lord smiles; to have an inward chuckling of spirit to see how Satan has laid his snares, and the Lord delivered us; to laugh at one’s enemy, at seeing how all his toils and stratagems have been defeated, is to imitate “the virgin, the daughter of Zion, who despised Sennacherib, and laughed him to scorn” (Isa. 37:22). Thus to laugh inwardly, without any witness, seriously and in the spirit, is a very different thing from the broad grin of self-delighted humour; and however we may be betrayed into unbecoming levity and mirth, this spiritual laughter is that which the blessed Spirit alone sanctions.

(vi) But there is also “a time to mourn, and a time to dance;” we need indeed to mourn over our wretched hearts—that we are so carnal, so stupid, and so earthly; that we have so little power to resist our evil passions that are continually striving for the mastery; to mourn over our lightness, our frivolity, and our emptiness;

to mourn over the things that will drop from our lips, whether we will or not; to mourn over the unsteadiness of our walk in the strait and narrow path; and to mourn over our many declensions, backslidings, and secret departures from the Lord. This is mourning—mourning in secret; mourning before the Lord; mourning on our midnight couch; mourning in our solitary chamber; mourning as we sit alone, because the hand of God is upon us.

And there is a “time to dance;” not with carnal revelry at the midnight ball, not with those amusements that the devil has invented in order to drown souls in everlasting perdition; but to dance as David danced before the ark. Not to dance as the daughter of Herodias, but as Miriam on the shore of the Red Sea; not the dancing of the children of Israel round the golden calf, but of “the virgin of Israel who goes forth in the dances of them that make merry” (Jer. 31:4). The dancing of which the Psalmist speaks, “Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing” (Ps. 30:11), that is, to dance with inward joy, to leap in one’s soul at the presence of the Lord, as the infant John leaped in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:41), to dance before the Lord with solemnity of spirit, and yet feeling such powerful emotions within, as though the heart would dance in one’s bosom.

Have you never felt, when the Lord dropped a sweet word of consolation into your conscience, what emotions filled your bosom beyond utterance, and how there was such an inward palpitation of soul, such an inward leaping of your heart in your bosom, that you could spiritually dance before the Lord, though it never affected one limb of your body, or broke out into open gestures? This, then, is the way in which the saints of old danced, and this is the way in which the saints dance now; not with carnal mirth, and wanton tripping of the feet, not with ungodly revelry, but in the inward spirit before God, dancing and leaping with joy to the praise of His name. “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King; let them praise His name in the dance; let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp” (Ps. 149:2, 3).

But these times and seasons are in the Father's hand; and "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Never talk of healing, till you can talk of killing; never think of being built up, until you have been broken down; never expect to laugh, until you have been taught to weep; and never hope to dance, until you have learned to mourn. Such only as are taught of God can enter into the real experience of these things; and into them, sooner or later, each according to his measure, does God the Holy Spirit lead all the ransomed family of Zion.

26 THE ENTRANCE OF LIGHT

Preached on Lord's Day morning, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, Whitechapel

July 11, 1841

"The entrance of they words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Psalm 119:130

There is a very striking analogy between the first or natural creation, when God first spoke this world into being, and the second or supernatural creation, when he calls his elect into a new and spiritual existence. We find the apostle Paul clearly alluding to this analogy (2 Cor. 4:6): "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We are warranted, then, by apostolic authority, to say that there is a resemblance, and no doubt an intended resemblance, between the natural creation and the spiritual creation. But what was this earth, before the Lord reduced it into beauty and order? for we are not to lose sight of this fact, that the earth existed before "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." "It was without form and void," or more literally, "emptiness and desolation;" a rude undigested chaos; a mass of confusion, where there was nothing that manifested beauty or comeliness. Thus it is spiritu-

ally. The soul exists before it is brought into an experimental acquaintance with God. But it exists as this world existed, before the all-creative fiat went forth from the lips of the most high—in ruins, where all is emptiness and desolation, a rude chaos, where there is no beauty nor comeliness but “a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness” (Job 10:22). We read in Prov. 8:25-31, that, even before this world was reduced into beauty and order the heart and affections of the Son of God were fixed upon his people, for under the name of Wisdom he thus speaks: “While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, I was then by him as one brought up with him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.” And thus, spiritually, even when the elect are in ruins before God, in their natural state of emptiness and desolation, there is a love which the Son of God bears unto them, as members of his body. The vessel of mercy is “preserved in Christ,” until the season to favour it comes. It lies as Lazarus in the grave, waiting the all-creative energy of the Son of God to bring it “out of darkness into marvellous light,” and out of the sleep of death into a new and spiritual life. But what do we read was the first act of creative energy, when the earth lay outstretched a rude chaos? “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The expression “moved,” implies rather such an act as a bird performs when she covers her brood. It is the same word that is translated in Deut. 32:11, “fluttereth”—“As an eagle fluttereth over her young;” implying a tremulous movement, a thrilling of maternal affection, as well as a spreading of her wings as widely as possible, so as to communicate warmth to the brood which she is covering. Thus, when “the Spirit of God” is said to have “moved upon the face of the waters,” it implies, that he covered it, as it were, with outstretched wings, that he communicated warmth and life and energy out of himself to it, that he fluttered over it with the affection that a bird bears to her young, when she broods over them in order to bring them

forth into life out of the egg, and then to foster them with all her maternal warmth. Thus does the Spirit of the Lord brood over the hearts of God's elect, when he quickens them into spiritual life, and as he, full of love and power, flutters over them, he breathes into them life out of the fulness of Jesus, so as to communicate to their dead souls the life of God. And as a simultaneous act, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." When God spake the word, light came at his almighty fiat that best and brightest fruit of the six days' work burst forth upon a dark world. But when this blessed effect of creative power—the material resemblance of that eternal and ineffable light in which Jehovah dwells—when this material, created light burst forth into existence, what did it disclose? Beauty, order, comeliness? No. These natural types of supernatural beauty, these visible and earthly shadowings forth of invisible and eternal perfections, did not then exist. All upon earth that the newborn light looked upon and discovered was one rude mass, a wide-spread chaos of confusion. So, when the Lord speaks the word, and spiritual light beams into the dark soul out of Him in whom all fulness dwells, it discovers neither beauty, nor order, nor comeliness. Emptiness of all good, confusion as to anything God-like, disordered passions, depraved affections, perverted faculties, mountains tossed over valleys, and valleys sank amid mountains, everything a rude distorted mass, where nothing is in its place, but all one universal wreck and ruin—such are the scenes which spiritual light discovers. Thus, when "the entrance of God's words giveth light," when by his speaking home his own commandment with power and authority to the soul, the Spirit conveys light out of Christ's fulness, he reveals to a man what his is; he shows him something of his fallen condition; he opens up that state of utter ruin, in which he stands before God, without any one thing that can please him; he manifests to him that he is altogether lost, without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without anything whereby he can gain the favour, or conciliate the pleasure of the Most High.

But “the entrance of the words of God giving light,” runs through the whole experience of a child of God, from the first pang of spiritual conviction, to the last expiring hallelujah; for all through his life will he need communications of life and light to his soul out of the fulness of Jesus. And therefore, in endeavouring to handle these words, and to open up their spiritual meaning, I shall not confine myself to the first work of grace upon the soul, but shall attempt to show how the truth contained in the text runs through the whole path of the Christian, and how he continually needs to have light communicated and breathed into him out of the fulness of his covenant Head.

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.” There is a certain character here spoken of, to whom “the entrance of God’s words giveth light,” and he is called by an expressive term, “the simple.” What gather we from that word? Does it mean to say, that the soul to which God gives light, is simple, naturally? that all in God’s family are fools? that the very circumstance of their believing the doctrines of grace stamps them as having inbred folly in them? Such I know is the charge of the world. But it is not the charge which God the Holy Ghost has laid against the people of God. They are indeed fools in the world’s estimation, and they are indeed fools in their own opinion; but “the simple” here signify those that are made such by a work of grace upon their hearts. The word “simple” means literally something which is not folded or twisted together. But owing to the treacherous and desperately deceitful heart of man, all, without exception, in a state of nature are the reverse of this. All their plots and contrivances for worldly profit or fleshly pleasure are tangled and complicated; and they are continually twisting together some thread or other of carnal policy. But when God the Holy Ghost begins the work of grace upon the souls of the elect, he proceeds if I may use the expression to untwist them. He takes hold of that rope which Satan and their own hearts have been twisting together for years, and he untwists it throughout its whole length, so as to leave the strands

not intertwined as before, but riven, separated, and torn from each other. The light that shines into the soul out of the fulness of Jesus discovers to a man the tortuousness, the crookedness, the complicated deceit and hypocrisy of which he is guilty. And he begins at the beginning, for the Spirit of God always makes thorough work; there is no compromising in his teaching, no huddling up of things together in his blessed operations. He commences at one end of the rope, and untwists it throughout from end to end. And when he has untwisted what our hearts are, with all their worldliness, with all their pride, with all their self-seeking, with all their hypocrisy, all their presumption, and all their baseness; when he has untwisted this complicated rope, he lays us out before the eye of God, with all the strands still writhing and curling, still retaining their crooked form, but no longer wreathed together into a solid mass of self-righteousness, nor “a cart-rope,” with which “iniquity is drawn” (Isa. 5:18).

Now, it is this process of untwisting a man, which makes him “simple”—undoing that strong cable which his own heart and the devil have been working at together for years, to try and twist him into something to please and satisfy self, or gain the favour of God. A man, then, is made “simple,” when the folds and rumples of his heart are shaken out, and he is brought to see and feel that God looks into him; that his eye penetrates into every recess of his bosom; that let him endeavour to wrap and fold himself up as he may, yet still the eye of God is continually piercing through “the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles and the whimples, the hoods and the vails;” and that there is not a thought in his heart, nor “a word in his tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether” (Ps. 139:4); nor “any creature that is not manifest in his sight, all things being naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom he has to do” (Heb. 4:13).

This character is aptly represented by Nathaniel. We read that “he was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile” (John 1:47). He had gone through this untwisting work in his soul. He

had been under the fig-tree and whilst kneeling and praying there, the eye of God looked into him, and just as a flash of lightning runs, in a moment, through a coil of wire, so, when the eye of God looked into Nathaniel's soul, that instantaneous flash unravelled and untwisted the devices of his heart, made him a simple man before him—"an Israelite, indeed, in whom there was no guile."

This, then, is the character to whom "understanding is given," and to whom "the entrance of God's words giveth light." Being divinely dealt with, and being by a work of grace upon his soul made honest and sincere, he is without admitted artifice, without allowed hypocrisy, without indulged deceitfulness, without the encouraged aim to stretch himself beyond the stature that God has given him. I use the words "allowed" and "encouraged," because he has indeed every evil still in his heart, but not reigning and rampant; what he does, like Paul, he "allows not" (Rom. 7:15). His humility is not counterfeit; he is no actor of a part; but "he is as he is," as people say; a four square man, upright and honest, single-eyed and sincere; and therefore he stands simple before God, and he stands simple before men. The lord has shown him to himself in his true colours, has made him know himself; has experimentally taught and made him to feel that he is a poor, needy, naked, guilty, filthy wretch; that he is a complete mass of disease, corruption, and pollution; that by nature he is nothing and has nothing spiritually good; that there is no one thing in his heart that God can look upon with acceptance; but that he is a vile fallen creature, who must be saved, if saved at all, by sovereign grace. He that answers to this description is a "simple" soul, and as such, is interested in this promise. Very different from the crafty professor of the present day, very different from the boasting Arminian, and the notional Calvinist! The character that I am describing, is "An honest man, the noblest work of God" for it is a true line taken spiritually, though written by a carnal poet, one who can say with David, "let integrity and uprightness preserve me" (Ps. 25:21); one whose heart is right before God, and who desires to walk before him in "simplicity and godly

sincerity.”

These characters have an interest in this declaration, that “the entrance of God’s words” into their souls, “giveth light.” And, in fact, it was the entrance of God’s words into their souls, which stamped upon them that character. It was this very communication of life and light out of Christ’s fulness, that made them “simple;” and then, being made “simple,” they became interested in the promises that are made to “the simple.”

1. “The entrance of God’s words giveth light” as to the character of Jehovah. How little is God really known! What a day of awful mockery is the day in which we live! God is more insulted in this Christian country so called, than he is in lands altogether heathen. In heathen lands his name is not mentioned. They bow down there to stocks of wood and stone. The name of Jehovah is not taken there into profane lips. But in this so-called Christian land, he is insulted and mocked on every side. Would it not have been a greater sin under the Levitical dispensation, to have rushed into the temple and profaned the altar, as King Antiochus did when he offered swine’s blood upon it, than to commit the same act upon a heathen altar, or profane the ancient mysteries of pagan worship? And is it not a greater profanation, a more daring insult and mockery of God, that his name should be taken into thousands of hypocritical lips, that he should be approached by thousands of ungodly professors, that the glory due to him should be trampled upon by crowds of traitors and renegades who call themselves by his name, than for his name not to be mentioned at all? Jerusalem exceeded Sodom and Samaria, her sisters, in wickedness (Ezek. 16:48), because she sinned against greater light and privileges. And thus the awful mockery of the ever-blessed Jehovah, in this so-called Christian land, seems stamped, in my eyes, as a greater insult to his glory, than the idolatries of heathen nations. Oh, how little is he known! How little is he feared! How little is he worshipped, and how little is he revered and loved! Nor can he be known to any except he reveal himself. “Darkness covereth the earth” the world

lying dead in profanity, "and gross darkness the people" the people lying dead in profession. Only those can know him to whom he is pleased to manifest himself, as he manifests himself not to the world. And wherever he manifests himself, he leaves the stamp of his presence; wherever he discovers himself in glory and majesty, he raises up a godly fear and trembling awe of his great name.

"The entrance of God's words, then, giveth light" to a man's conscience, and infuses life into a man's soul, as to the character of Jehovah, before whom he bows down in reverence and godly fear; and he learns, by spiritual teaching, what a pure, holy, righteous, just God he is. He learns by heavenly tuition that he abhors evil. He is taught by heavenly manifestations that he is not to be mocked. He learns; through the channel of powerful convictions, that he is to be approached only with godly reverence and trembling awe, as "a consuming fire." Such an "entrance of light," concerning the character of God, fills the soul with reverential trembling before him, and bows it down with deep prostration of spirit before the throne of his majesty. But the same divine entrance of light into our consciences manifests our contrariety with that character of Jehovah, which is thus revealed to us. We learn things by their contrasts. We know darkness by the previous presence of light; we know light by the preceding experience of darkness. The contrast of the one with the other shows more clearly each. And thus it is with that acquaintance, which an awakened sinner gains by divine teaching with himself. He sees light in God's light. His own character is contrasted with the character of Jehovah. Purity is contrasted with impurity, holiness with uncleanness, righteousness with unrighteousness, justice with sin, the brightness of heavenly glory with the foul workings of corruption; the majesty, greatness, and spotless lustre of Jehovah, with the base abominations and loathsome obscenities of the creature. Thus we learn to know what we really are, and to feel it deeply, too, in our consciences by having some spiritual acquaintance with the character of God. And no man can know anything of the horrible nature of sin, of the black

pollution that lurks in his bosom, of the awful condition of our most depraved, diseased nature—no man can know them so as to feel what they really are—no man can shrink, as it were, into the very depths of self-abasement on account of what he carries about with him, except him into whose heart light has come, into whose soul there has been an “Entrance of God’s words,” and into whose conscience the entrance of that word has communicated light as to who God is and light as to what he himself is naturally before Him.

The knowledge of sin, then, is no doctrine merely learned from the Bible. A spiritually taught man does not read the third chapter of Romans to learn from it that “he is guilty before God.” He does not turn to the seventeenth Jeremiah, to learn that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;” and note it down in his pocket-book as a certain doctrine which he has just found in God’s word, an item of remembrance, a memorandum for a certain day of the month, lest it should slip his memory. But it is that which the Holy Ghost stamps inwardly upon his conscience. What that heavenly Teacher impresses there, is, so to speak, a counterpart of what is recorded in the word of God. Just as the printer’s type stamps upon the paper, in a distinct and legible character, the exact letter that stands jutting out upon its face; just as the coin from the Mint is the precise image of the die, and the one is the counterpart of the other, “so the heart of a child of God, impressed by the Spirit of the Lord, presents the very counterpart to the stamp which the Holy Ghost brings down upon it. The word of God is the type that the Spirit uses to imprint truth on the heart—powerless in itself as the leaden letters in the compositor’s case, but effective in his divine hand; and thus, when that heavenly Teacher writes his lesson of convictions in the conscience, the living soul is brought to groan and sigh, to lament and mourn as a polluted sinner before God, as a deeply infected wretch, a vile leper who has to stand “with his clothes rent, and his head bare, with a covering upon his upper lip, crying; Unclean, unclean” (Leviticus 13:45). It is “the entrance of Gods words into his conscience, which has given him

light upon this inward leprosy. And he sees it, feels it, knows it, and sighs under it, just as palpably, just as visibly, just as evidently, and just as undeniably, as Miriam beheld herself “leprous, white as snow” (Num. 12:10); as King Uzziah felt the burning leprosy burst forth in his forehead (2 Chron. 26:19); and as the leper excluded from the camp, smarted under “the quick raw flesh” (Lev. 13:10), that festered and broke out in his body.

Corruption is not a mere doctrine in God’s word, or like an article in the creed of a church, incorporated into its writings, and received by all its members. It is not merely assented to, as a man may read over a doctrinal statement, and say, I agree to the doctrine of original sin,” and subscribe his name, as the young men at the University subscribe to the thirty-nine articles. But it is a deep and abiding feeling, a spiritual and divine impression, seen in the light that the Spirit of God himself casts into the conscience. It is a felt disease. It is not like taking a medical book and reading therein the symptoms of consumption; but it is having the disease itself in our vitals. It is not like seeing a patient afflicted with a complaint, and with the learned one of a physician tracing out the symptoms, but it is suffering, labouring, gasping, and heaving under the malady, as developed in us. And that is the way that “the entrance of God’s words giveth light—by teaching a man personally and individually, that he is everything by nature that the word of God declares him to be, and making him as certain of it, as though he had handled it with his hands, and seen it with his eyes.

2. But again: “the entrance of God’s words giveth light,” not only as to the disease and wretched malady which has infected all Adam’s posterity, the elect together with the rest, but it also communicates light as to the remedy, we want the remedy, friends. A patient does not go to the hospital merely for the surgeon to handle his sores, or to be made an exhibition for the students to be lectured upon. But he goes there to be healed. Thus the Bible, in the hands of the Spirit as making use of the Bible to teach God’s people, does not merely reveal the deep-seated disease which has

infected the elect, together with the whole of Adam's race, but it discovers also that remedy, that blessed remedy, which God has provided in the Son of his love. The Scriptures are full of Jesus. They testify of his glory, they speak of his power; they proclaim his atoning blood; they reveal, all through the sacred page his glorious justifying righteousness. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" And therefore, the whole word of God, from beginning to end, is one testimony of Jesus, as the Saviour of his people. But we want light to see it; we need life to feel it; we require power to believe it; we want application to enjoy it.

But "the entrance of God's words giveth light." The blessed Spirit is pleased sometimes to give some testimony concerning Jesus, to open up some passage of Scripture which speaks of Jesus, to cast a divine light before the astonished eyes, and to throw some of the blessed beams of gospel truth into our souls, whereby we see Jesus. We are brought sometimes in soul-feeling to the desires of those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, and went to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21); and from some apprehension of his beauty and loveliness, we pour out our soul before God, and say, "We would see Jesus." We want to feel his love, to have our eyes anointed to behold his glory, to look upon him as crucified for us and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may have a sweet and blessed fellowship with him as our suffering surety, and thus, by faith, enter into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his "that passeth knowledge." Wherever there is a work of grace upon the soul, there will be this pining after Christ. The soul that is really taught of God can never rest satisfied short of Jesus. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9), and they can never be satisfied short of that rest, which consists in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, as revealed by the Holy Ghost to their souls. But before the enjoyment of this spiritual rest, there is often long delay; clouds of darkness for months and years together often envelope the mercy-seat; the cross of Christ cannot be

seen; the Holy Ghost does not fulfil his covenanted office in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul; and in the absence of these heavenly manifestations, we cannot realise our interest in the things of salvation, nor can we feel our hearts sweetly composed and settled down in the blessed assurance, that when this life shall come to a close, we shall inhabit mansions prepared for us before the foundation of the world. When “with clouds he covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt” (Job 36:32), there are many doubts and fears and suspicions and surmises and jealousies whether we are not deceived and deluded altogether. At such seasons, everything seems to be against us, and to stamp us as being nothing but nominal professors.

It is in such dark and gloomy seasons as these that “the entrance of God’s words giveth light.” For instance, some such promise as this is made sweet to the soul: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). As that promise is brought home with power to the heart, and is shed abroad with some sweetness in the soul, it draws forth and strengthens faith, and the toiling pilgrim comes to the Lord, feeling himself “weary and heavy laden,” and as he comes, he is indulged sometimes with a few sweet moments of rest. He is enabled to look out of fallen self, with all its miseries, and to look upon Jesus in his grace and beauty. He is favoured to cast himself simply, as he is, upon Jesus, and some sense of his atoning blood, dying love, and complete propitiation for sin is opened up to his heart. Faith springs up to lay hold of and embrace it, and he begins to taste the savour and sweetness and healing efficacy of a Saviour’s blood and love. Thus “the entrance of God’s words giveth light,” and he feels by the divine coming in of what God has externally revealed, that inward light is shed abroad in the recesses of his soul, and he can, in some measure, realise the power of the cross of Jesus in his heart.

3. But we often get into such dark paths, that we seem alto-

gether out of the secret, and feel as if there were no more grace in our souls, than in one altogether dead in trespasses and sins. And whether we look back at the past, or view the present, or turn our eyes to the future, one dark cloud seems to rest upon the whole; nor can we, with all our searching, find to our satisfaction that we have one spark of true religion, or one atom of grace, or one grain of vital godliness, or any trace that the Spirit of God has touched our consciences with his finger. Now, when we are in this dark, benighted state, we want light; we want the blessed Son of righteousness to arise; we want the south wind to blow a heavenly gale, and drive the mists away; we want the clouds to part, and the light of God's countenance to shine into our souls, so as to show us where we are, and what we are, and make it clear, that base and vile as we are, yet that we are interested in the love of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

Are you never there In soul-feeling? Do you not sometimes look into your hearts, and weigh up your evidences, and examine yourselves, and say, "I must honestly confess" and you sink fathoms in a moment "that I cannot find in my soul one mark of grace; I am as worldly, as stupid, as ignorant, and as carnal, as though the finger of God had never touched me." In these seasons, then, you want the entrance of light. You cannot run to a friend, and say, "Be so kind as to give me a little flattery. Do just take the white-wash brush, and brush me over; get out the mortar and trowel, and daub me over with a little plaster. Pray, put a little putty into these cracked evidences; shore up my sinking religion, that it may not be altogether" a tottering wall, and a bowed fence." No; you would rather ask a man of God to take his trowel, and pick out with the pointed end all the putty, instead of putting fresh into the crack. You would rather stand naked before God, that he himself might, in his own time and way, clothe you with the garments of salvation, than be wrapped up in the veils and mantles of profession, or borrow a robe from your neighbour. Thus in these seasons you cannot go to man. You cannot angle for praise. If you resemble me,

you cannot go to a child of God with a head hanging like a bulrush, and with demure looks throw out some disparaging, condemnatory sentence against yourself, for the express purpose of your Christian friend taking it up in order to underprop with it your religion. But you will act as Jeremiah says he did (Jer. 15:17), "I sat alone, because of thy hand;" you will do as we read (Lam. 3:28) he does who bears the yoke,—"*he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.*" You will be crying unto the Lord in some secret corner, be tossing on your midnight couch, wrestling with the Saviour for a manifestation, and big scalding drops will be rolling down your cheeks, that the Lord would make himself known unto you, and sprinkle your conscience with his atoning blood. You will be sighing and mourning, away from every human eye and every human ear, that the Lord himself would lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and cause you experimentally to know the meaning of the words: *The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" You can't be satisfied with the doctrine of Christ's blood, and the doctrine of Christ's righteousness, and the doctrine of God's everlasting love, but you want the feeling application of it; the spiritual and supernatural entrance of it into your souls, so as to raise up that in your hearts which shall bring you out of prison to praise and bless his name. And you want this entrance of light into your heart, that it may give you entrance into that which is within the veil, even a sweet and blessed entrance, by faith into the very heart and compassionate bosom of Jesus, so as to drink into his spirit, and to be melted into his likeness. This is the religion that I want; and as to any other, I would, in my right mind, tear every shred of it from me. As to any religion that does not stand in divine teachings, sweet applications, blessed manifestations, and heavenly testimonies, I would throw it aside from me as an unclean garment—I would bury all such rags and tatters in the first dunghill that I came to.

Thus, "*The entrance of God's words giveth light.*" And when his word begins to distil like the rain and to drop like the dew, when

the Lord himself is pleased to speak home one sweet testimony, one little word, one kind intimation—what a change it makes! The clouds break away, the fog clears off, the mists dissolve, and the soul becomes sweetly persuaded of its interest in the blood and love of the Lamb.

The religion of God's people will always be utterly distinct from the religion of the professor. Their religion is a lo! here and lo! there, a running to and fro, with fleshly excitement, little else but bustle and noise, a work that the creature has to perform. This is their whole object. They have a weight to lift to the top of the house, and so they go to the crane, and work hard at the winch; though it often runs back, yet they keep toiling on; and when they have got the bale to the top of the warehouse, and seem just ready to bring it in at the window, it slips off the hook, and down it falls to the ground; but nothing discouraged, they begin again, until the end will be, if grace prevent not, that the bale of good works, which they are endeavouring to raise, will pull them down headlong with it into hell. But God's, people, when rightly taught, want no such working at the winch. They want to lie passive, to do nothing, to be nothing. Their sweetest spot is that described in Isaiah (Isa. 64:8): "We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." They want to know nothing but what God teaches; to feel nothing but what God inspires; to have nothing but what God gives; and to be nothing but what God makes them. So far as they are spiritually taught, and are living under divine influences, they desire to have no more will, or power, or strength, or wisdom, or righteousness, than the clay that lies on the potter's wheel; and the simple breathing of their heart is, to feel the potter's fingers working in them, moulding them, framing them into vessels of mercy; for they know if they can but have the potter's fingers in their soul, that he will make them all that he would have them to be.

4. But again: we often get into states and frames of mind, where we need something else besides consolation. A child would not grow, if it were always fed upon sweetmeats. It must have exercise,

and be exposed to the weather, and have the cold winds blow upon its face, and be hardened, so as to enable it to bear the chill winter and the nipping frosts. So the child of God is not always petted, and fed upon love-tokens. He is not always carried to the warm bosom, or sucking the breasts of consolation, but he has to learn lessons to fit him to be a soldier. The soldier we know has to endure hardships. He has to lie all night upon the wet grass; to be pinched with hunger, parched with thirst, and nipped with cold; to make harassing marches; to hear the roar of the cannon and the whistling of the bullets, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting;" to see the flash of the sabre uplifted to cut him down, and the glitter of the bayonet at his breast, aye, and to feel painful and dangerous wounds. So with the spiritual soldier in God's camp. He has to hunger and thirst, to suffer cold, nakedness, and hard privations, to be shot at by the arrows of calumny and the fiery darts of Satan, to make harassing marches through an enemy's country, to suffer painful wounds, and by these very exercises to learn to be a soldier. Only so far as he is thus exercised spiritually can he learn the art of war, can he know how to fight and make effectual battle under the banners or the Lord against the enemies of his salvation. As a parent, when his child is old and strong enough, often sends him away from home that he may push his way in the world, so does the Lord often put down his children from the lap on which he has dandled them, and thrusts them out of doors, that they may buffet with the storms of life. By being exposed to these hardships, a child of God begins to learn what that rich and sovereign grace is, of which he has had already a taste, but the fullness and sufficiency of which he has yet to experience; his eyes are more clearly opened to see the wondrous way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and he becomes initiated into, and inured to those paths of trial and difficulty, in which the Christian pilgrim must walk. After the Lord has blessed a soul with a taste of his goodness and mercy, he will often withdraw his comforts, and leave it, perhaps for weeks, months, and sometimes for years, to toil on in darkness and despondency, with-

out dropping in any blessed testimony of his love. By these things the soul learns that the way to heaven is a rough and rugged road, encompassed with difficulties and beset with temptations, that it is no easy smooth path, but one that requires a vigorous traveller, one strengthened and upheld by the power and grace of God to hold on to the end. When he is in this path he wants light; and his secret cry is "Where am I? What am I? Am I a child of God? Am I in the way of eternal life?" Sometimes he can look back on the past, and then he says with Job: "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (Job 29:4, 5). And contrasting his former experience with his present, he says: "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him" (Job 23:3; Job 23:8, 9). He is "full of confusion" (Job 10:15); he cannot tell where he is, having lost his way, and being embarrassed with the different state he is in now, from the time when "he washed his steps in butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil" (Job 29:6). He now wants some fresh, some peculiar entrance of light into his soul, to show him the path, and that he is in it, as well as to make plain to him the very spot in the road where he is. And when the Lord applies some such words as these: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isa. 42:16),—when these words are opened up by the Spirit, and power is communicated with them, faith is raised up to act upon them, light comes with them, and the soul sees where it really is, that God has been fulfilling his promise of "leading a poor, blind, ignorant, wayfaring fool by a way that he knew not."

5. Sometimes we get into a cold, carnal, careless, backsliding state, wherein there seems to be no more concern for the things of

God and Christ, than if we had never had one spiritual feeling. The soul in this state seems altogether lost and buried in worldly business or the cares of this life, and as to real religion, though the form is preserved, yet there appears to be little else than the mere shell. It is as though all the flesh had dropped off the bones, and there were nothing left but the bare skeleton. In these seasons a man wants light from the entrance of God's word; and light he shall have. But what light will God give him? Not the light of his countenance, not the light of blessed manifestations or gracious discoveries of love. That would not do for him. He wants other remedies. He needs the rod, not the love-kiss. He wants stripes, not smiles, for "stripes are prepared for the back of fools" (Prov. 19:29); "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways;" and "whom the lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). When the soul is in this state, the entrance of God's words giving light, shows us where we are, and where we have been, how carnal, how earthly, how covetous, how proud, how buried in the things of time and sense, how thinking, speaking, and acting, in a thousand instances, in a manner unbecoming one that fears God, how little separated in heart and spirit from those we have formerly condemned, how wrapped up in the folds of sensuality and sin, and how glued and fettered down to the perishing vanities of life. The entrance of life discovering to us our base backslidings, brings with it some deep and solemn pangs of guilt and condemnation. Jonah ran away from the presence of the Lord, and hoped to arrive safely at Tarshish. But what were his successive steps? he first fell asleep "in the sides "hold" of the ship," and next was tumbled headlong out of them into the belly of the whale, and there he found himself, in soul feeling, "in the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2). There was but a short interval between his sleep in the ship and the "weeds being wrapped about his head." But he never came to himself till he got into the fish's belly. So in the moments of solemn recollection produced by the entrance of the sentence of reproof, we consider what we have been doing, where we have been, how we have back-

slidden from God, how base and carnal we have been; and as the Lord drops some severe rebuke and cutting sentence into the conscience, the afflicted soul groans and sighs with the up-heavings of bitter reflection, and he puts his mouth into the dust with the deepest self-loathing and abhorrence.

6. But again; there are times when we get into such a state of mind as to be shaken as to the truth of God altogether. We see those perhaps whom we held in high esteem, gone utterly astray from truth, slidden back into the world, made shipwreck of their faith, or even to have died in despair. We hear or read of ministers who once stood boldly forth as champions of truth, that they have swerved into some awful error, or have fallen into open sin, and have been made manifest as hypocrites. And perhaps those whom we ourselves have walked with, in times past, in sweet friendship, and what we then thought was soul union and communion, we see manifested as enemies of truth, and haters of the people of God. Being ourselves full of darkness and unbelief, and thus open to the withering blasts of infidelity, we pause, and say, "Is there such a thing as religion? Is it all delusion?" To see these pillars fall, it makes the very earth shake, and we say, "Is it not a lie of priestcraft altogether?" But there comes some solemn testimony out of God's word, such as a text of this kind: "Let God be true, and every man a liar" Rom. 3:4. We bow and fall down in our hearts and consciences before the testimony; and instruction is communicated to our souls from this entrance of God's word, showing us that these things must be, that it ever was so in the church; that it is God's will that there should be wheat and tares, sheep and goats; that "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" Rom. 11:7; that God knows them that are his, and that he will keep his own people by faith unto salvation. And being brought to rest here, we are glad to abide by the immutable promises of Jehovah, and be weaned from leaning upon an arm of flesh, or putting any confidence in man.

7. But again: we want from time to time some recovery of our

soul out of that state of carnality and deadness into which we often sink. We need revivals; we want to have our heart and affections drawn upwards, that "our youth may be renewed like the eagle's." We wish to plume our wings, and not always be chained down to "a body of sin and death." We desire some enlargement of heart, some revival of faith and hope, some going forth of soul after, and some spiritual acquaintance with Christ. But it must be "the entrance of God's words," carrying a divine light into the chambers of conscience, which can alone show us our election in Christ, the cleansing away of all our sins by the atoning blood of Christ, the justification of our persons by the imputed obedience of Christ, and our certain perseverance in the faith and hope of the gospel until we arrive to the realms of endless bliss, to see Christ as he is.

8. Sometimes we want light as to the path of practical obedience in which we are called to walk. A difficulty presents itself which we cannot well surmount; or the right path is diametrically opposed to our natural wishes, or worldly interests we begin to inquire, "How shall we act in this dilemma? How shall we conduct ourselves in this matter?" An enigma has to be solved, a knot has to be untied. But what does the word of God say? What does conscience say? What do the whisperings of the Spirit say? "O," but answers the carnal mind, "that is such a painful path. Cannot there be a little edging? Is there not a little path in the meadows there, inside the highway? Must the feet be always galled by the rough road? Is there not a little relaxation sometimes allowed from such a strict line of conduct as the precepts of the gospel point out? May we not, in a little degree, just on one occasion, decline out of the path? Surely a little sin once in a way cannot damn a man?" Here is Satan laying his snares and endeavouring to catch the unwary traveller, striving hard to plunge us into sin, by hiding its real nature and horrible character from us, and urging us to say of it, "Is it not a little one?" Here again "the entrance of God's words giveth light," showing to us that right is right, and wrong is wrong—that what God has declared to be sinful must stand stamped for ever with his

holy indignation, above all the sophistry of man and the subtlety of the devil, let them endeavour to disguise it as much as they can. The word of God is unerring truth; what he has there revealed is, under the teachings of the Blessed Spirit, our only rule of conduct, our sure standard of practice; and when, through the entrance of his word, light is communicated, and the soul is enabled to make the sacrifice, to walk in the self-denying path, to take up the cross and follow Jesus in the regeneration, he will drop some sweet whisper, impart some blessed consolation, and manifest to the soul that it is treading in a path that leadeth to eternal glory.

Oh, that we could have more and more of the entrance of God's words into our souls to give light! What happiness, what peace should we feel at the entrance of his word, giving us light to see, and life to feel our interest in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; light into the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; light into his tender compassion for his dear people; light into the work of the Holy Ghost, the certainty of his teaching all the family of God, and the certainty of his teaching us; light in all crooked dispensations and trying paths; in poverty contempt, and hatred; light amid the persecution of professors, and the hard speeches of some of the living family of God; light upon, and life under all the difficulties that beset the way that leads to life. Oh, how happy, and how full of everything that the foul longs after should we be, if we had more of this heavenly light to show us the things of God, and seal them with sweetness and power upon our consciences! But it is the want of this light, the absence of these cheering beams, the withholding of these gleams of consolation and instruction, that leaves us so continually struggling here, and staggering there, scarcely knowing what we are, and where we are. It is the Lord hiding his blessed countenance and not unveiling it, that we may look on it, and see mercy and love shining there, which leaves many of us, at times, full of doubts and fears and suspicions and surmises, whether we are the children of God or not. It is the not being able, experimentally and inwardly, to realise all that is contained in

these words, “the entrance of thy words giveth light;” it is the not having these blessed things fulfilled in our experience, that leaves us oftentimes uncertain what to speak, what to think, or what to do. But still the promise remains good. If the Lord has made our hearts simple, if he has untwisted us, and laid us at his feet, simply desiring to be taught of him, if he has riven us asunder from that carnal policy, that empty profession, and that base hypocrisy which is stamped upon thousands, and has made our hearts spiritually upright before him, he will fulfil his own promises. Their fulfilment depends upon his own eternal faithfulness; for he hath purposed, and he will also do it, yea, he hath spoken, and he will surely bring it to pass.

27 THE ONLY SAFE KEEPING

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London on closing his annual visit to the Metropolis, on Tuesday evening.

July 13th 1841

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1Peter 1:5

This Epistle of Peter, like all the other epistles of the apostles, is addressed to the quickened family of God. The epistles were written to churches; and though there were in those churches then, just as there are in churches now, wheat and tares, sheep and goats, yet generally speaking, we find the apostles not taking direct notice of the chaff that was mingled with the wheat on the threshing-floor, but addressing them as what they professed to be—the children of the living God. Thus this Epistle of Peter is addressed “to the strangers that were scattered throughout” the countries mentioned, who, he says, were “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;” and he thanks God, who according to His abundant mercy, had begotten them and him

again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Those, then only, who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, and who are begotten again to a living hope by a manifestation to their souls of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

The children of God and the mere nominal professors of vital godliness hold the same truths, but they believe them in a different way, and they get at them in a different manner. The nominal professor receives the doctrines because he sees them in God's Word; the living soul receives them because they are taken out of God's Word by the Holy Ghost, and are revealed with power to his soul. The nominal professor is quite satisfied with a dim, shadowy hope that he is interested in gospel blessings; but the living soul can never be satisfied with anything short of the witness of the Holy Ghost to his soul, that he is a child of God, and therefore is interested in every blessing with which God has blessed His people in Christ. And as they believe them in a different way, so they get at them in a different manner. The family of God get at truth through trouble, distress, affliction, temptation, and tribulation; they arrive at the banquet through sharp pangs of hunger; they arrive at the clothing through being chilled with cold and nakedness; they arrive at the cross after travelling through the pangs of guilt in their conscience; and they arrive at a knowledge of their adoption into the family of God after being exercised with many poignant doubts and fears whether God is their Father at all. Thus the living family and the nominal professor of religion not merely differ in the way whereby they believe the truth; the one believing it spiritually, the other believing it naturally; the one believing it with his heart, the other believing it with his head; the one feeling it in his conscience, the

other having it merely floating in his brain; but also they arrive at the experimental knowledge of the truth of God by a totally different road. Thus, however they may seem to resemble one another in the doctrines that they each profess to believe, yet there is an eternal distinction, which the hand of the Holy Ghost has drawn, between the living and the dead in Jerusalem.

The nominal professor is quite satisfied with the doctrine of final perseverance as it is revealed in the Scriptures. He knows nothing experimentally of the dangers and difficulties of the way; he is not exercised in his own soul by any temptations, any distressing doubts, any agonizing fears; and therefore, gliding at ease down the smooth stream, he knows nothings of storms, gusts, winds, and waves, and thinks that this smooth stream will land him safe in the harbour of everlasting peace, when it is only like the river St. Lawrence, which glides the more smoothly the nearer it approaches the cataracts; the deeper it is, the calmer it flows, until the hapless navigator, once entangled in the rapids, is carried headlong down the falls of Niagara into the foaming abyss below. But all God's people arrive at the doctrine of final perseverance by feeling how necessary and how suitable the truth is to them. And they do not learn it once, and then for ever retain the knowledge of it; but it is a truth which accompanies them throughout all their pilgrimage here below, as being suited to those extremities in which they often feel themselves, and adapted to those temptations and exercises which they have to pass through continually.

What read we in our text? That the elect are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." The word kept is a very significant one. It means literally, garrisoned—kept as in a fortress, surrounded by bulwarks. And this is the way in which God keeps His people. They are garrisoned around by all the attributes of God; there is "a wall of fire round about" them, and they are surrounded by every attribute which God has in Himself, and which He has been pleased to reveal, that we may know it, and give Him the glory of it.

Now the very expression, kept, implies that they need keeping. A fortress is provided against an enemy. The very circumstance of a fortification being erected shows that there are enemies, who would fain destroy the lives of those persons whom the walls of the fortress are intended to protect. So when we read that the elect are garrisoned by God—shut up (as it were) in a strong city, of which God has appointed salvation as the walls and bulwarks, we gather that there are enemies ever on the watch, and that the object and aim of these enemies is to sweep them away from the land of the living. Before, then, a man can know anything experimentally of the sweetness of being kept of the almighty power and faithfulness which are exerted in his behalf he must have some personal acquaintance with those enemies, who are ever upon the alert, if it be possible, to destroy him utterly. This fortress is not like a fortified town where the officers can strut upon the parade and never see the smoke of an enemy's camp, and where the cannon are never fired but on gala days. This fortress is not like the Tower just below, where the sentinel walks round the battlements, and never sees an enemy to give an alarm. But this garrison, which contains the redeemed, is one in a state of siege, which the enemies are continually seeking to take. the walls of which they are continually endeavouring to batter down the inmates of which they are continually aiming to wound, and, if possible, to destroy.

For instance, there is the world. A man knows not what an enemy the world is, who has not in some measure been separated from it. To a professor of religion, who has the doctrines of grace in his head and is devoid of the feeling power of truth in his soul, the world is no enemy, for he is no enemy to the world. He has no tender conscience that feels how liable he is to be entrapped by the baits and allurements which the world scatters in his path; there is no struggling with him to have communion with the Lord, which, the world intercepts; there is no endeavour to withdraw his spirit from being carried away by the business that he is needfully occupied with; and therefore the nominal professor of religion feels

not the world to be his enemy, because the world and he are agreed upon matters. His religion is not a religion that offends the world; and his heart has not been touched by the finger of God. so as to feel the world to be his enemy, because it is the enemy of God. It is the child of God who feels what a heart he has, and how this heart is continually being carried away by the temptations set before him; it is he who has some insight into the character of God as a heart-searching Jehovah, and knows that He abhors evil; it is he who desires to be in reality what he professes to be—a follower of Jesus, and to have the image of God stamped upon his soul and to walk as Jesus walked when here below—it is he, and he only, who really knows that the world is his enemy. And a living soul does feel, and most painfully feel too, that unless he is kept by the power of God through faith, from the baits and allurements of the world, he will surely and inevitably be entangled thereby.

Again, Satan is another enemy, that is continually on the look out, ever watching to entrap or harass the souls of God's family. Sometimes he comes as an "angel of light," casting his magic delusions over the eyes, so that, under the influences of this wonderful magician, we are prompted to "call evil good, and good evil, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness." Sometimes he comes in all the garb of holiness, endeavouring to draw us away from the righteousness and sanctification of Christ, in order to set up some creature holiness of our own. Sometimes he comes to us with base antinomian injections, as though because the doctrine of election is sure, and because we have some evidence that we are the children of God, sin could not damn us, nor harm us, and secretly suggesting that this gratification is innocent, and that pleasure allowable; and thus, by casting these antinomian principles into our mind, he hides that trap which he is secretly preparing for our unwary feet. Sometimes he will come upon us "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," opening his mouth of blasphemy, raising up everything which is hateful and dreadful in our carnal mind, even tempting us

to “curse God and die.” Sometimes in a hidden unperceived manner, he stirs up the base lusts and passions of our carnal mind, tempting us to believe that there is no harm in their gratification, and then, perhaps, turning round upon us as hypocrites. Thus does this crafty and powerful enemy seek sometimes to carry the city by storm, sometimes to take the city by mine—sometimes to creep in under the garb of a friend—sometimes by open violence to break through the gates, if he may by assault or stratagem carry off the soldiers that are under the banners of Immanuel.

It would not so much matter if there were not a worse enemy than these; the enemy within, the traitor within the walls, the renegade, the deserter within the camp. Oh! friends, when we call to mind our slips and our falls, when we look back upon our lives, the many base declensions of our soul from God, the many snares in which we have been entangled, do we not see that our own base heart, our own vile nature, has been a worse enemy than all? Who knows the strength of sin in a man, but he who has in some measure been carried away by it? Who knows the power of these gusts, except the mariner, who has been well nigh shipwrecked upon the shoals and sand-banks by having his poor shattered bark blown from the right course by them? Who is acquainted with the hidden shoals of this intricate navigation, but he who from time to time has felt the keel of his vessel just graze upon them, and yet by the grace of God has not been shipwrecked? Who can put down the buoys to mark the right channel, but the navigator who, with the lead in his hand, has sounded the reefs and quicksands of his own heart?

Those then that have an experimental acquaintance with these enemies of their salvation, with those external and internal foes that “war against their soul,” will be glad when the Lord drops into their hearts some testimony that He is keeping them; they will be glad to feel that hand which has been outstretched on their behalf. They cannot boast with the proud Arminian that they have kept themselves; they cannot sacrifice unto their own net, nor burn in-

cense to their own drag, for they know feelingly and they know bitterly, that when the Lord's arm was not under them but for a single moment, they were not able to stand. When He has left them but for an instant to the lusts of their own vile heart, to the allurements of the world, to the baits of Satan, they were no more able to resist the temptations that beset them, than the babe that is put down by its mother upon the ground, is able to stand alone. Those, then, that are kept, are kept by God. All others, sooner or later, will make shipwreck.

It is something like that allegory which I have read in Addison, "The Vision of Mirza," where he compares life to a bridge of a hundred arches, that extended over a river, and as he watched, he observed a number of travellers passing over this bridge; and ever and anon he saw one drop in through some secret hole, and then before he could pass over another arch another dropped in, until before any passenger came to the end of the bridge, the whole had fallen into the river that flowed beneath. So spiritually, all travellers but those that are kept by God will sooner or later drop through these pitfalls into eternal perdition. Some may continue for a shorter, and others for a longer time; but all who are not kept by the power of God, all under whom the everlasting arms have not been placed, all who are not wrapped up in the embraces of Jesus, and held firmly by Him, will drop, sooner or later, through these pitfalls into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But God has covenanted to keep His people; when He gave them to Jesus, He gave them to Him that He might redeem them by His own blood, that none should be lost, and that none should ever pluck them out of His hand. Therefore, the elect are kept by the power of God, and they are sure to be preserved blameless until the day of Christ's appearing.

Mark the way in which God keeps them. They are kept "by the power of God through faith." God does not keep His people, as a mother keeps her child from the fire by putting a tall iron fender round it. God does not preserve His people from falling

into the river, by putting up a high balustrade upon the bridge. God does not keep His people from harm, as in lunatic asylums they confine maniacs with chains and fetters and strait-waistcoats. Such is not God's way of keeping His people. God's people are not steam engines, that are worked by mechanical power, and operated upon without any feelings or sensations in their own bosoms. God keeps His people through faith. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith." There is then that grace in the soul, which is made an instrument of their being kept. God does not keep His people from sin, by tying up their legs so that they shall not go into the world, as a mother may tie her child's leg to the table, to keep her truant from running out into the street; but the Lord keeps His people from sin, by implanting that grace in their hearts, which forms a link between Himself and them. He keeps them, by breathing that faith in their souls, whereby in times of trouble and distress and necessity they have recourse to Him. He keeps them, by opening up a channel of communication with Himself, a channel through which grace is bestowed, strength imparted, wisdom given, and love shed abroad; so that God keeps His people from evil, not in a mechanical manner, but He keeps them spiritually and experimentally by raising up that grace in their souls, whereby they are enabled to take hold of His strength.

One shall say, How does faith act in the matter? What connection is there between being kept from evil and faith as a grace in the soul? The connection is this. Faith is that eye of the soul, which realizes that which God presents to it; faith is that ear of the soul, which hears the instruction that God communicates; and faith is that hand of the soul, which takes hold of those promises that God reveals to it. If you saw a man deaf and blind, walking in a road which ended on a precipice, all your warnings would be thrown away upon him; he could not see the danger, he could not hear your warning voice; before you could save him from the precipice at the end of the road, you must give him an ear to hear your warning, you must give him an eye to see the danger which threatens

him. This then is that which faith does. God, when He keeps His people by His mighty power, communicates to them eye-sight, by giving them faith; and imparts to them hearing, by opening their ear, for faith is "the evidence of things not seen," and "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Faith then acts in this way: our eyes being opened, we see the danger; we see the world presents allurements, baits, and charms, which are suited to our fallen nature; we see Satan stirring up the pride of our heart, infusing his own cursed presumption, entangling us in his own dreadful hypocrisy, hardening us (or endeavouring to harden us,) into some measure of his own impenitence, inflating us with some of that arrogance which dwells in him, as "king over all the children of pride." Faith sees, recognises, feels, is alive to these suggestions, that Satan is casting in.

When flattery comes before the heart of a hypocrite, he feeds upon it eagerly; but when flattery comes before the heart of a child of God, he often sees under the flattery the cloven foot. When a gust of presumption comes in the way of a hypocrite, it takes him off his legs, because he has no ballast in self whereby he can stand against it; but when a gust of presumption blows hard against a child of God, he has that inward ballast of suffering, condemnation, tribulation, and temptation, whereby he is kept from being blown away. When Satan is permitted to open his mouth in the heart of a dead professor, and to blow into it the blasphemy with which he himself is infected, he makes use of that mouth as a vent for his own enmity against God, and he thrusts that soul into the wretched state in which he himself lies; but when he would breathe his own enmity into the heart of a child of God, there is a tender conscience, there is a principle of godly fear, there is a crying unto the Lord, there is a secret abhorrence of soul, whereby his temptations are rejected. And thus Satan, who prevails in a moment over the man destitute of faith, who casts him down and sweeps him into destruction with a breath, when his arts and arms are levelled at a child of God, finds that invincible grace in him, that

faith which was received from God, which strengthens him and supports him in the hour of trial, and stands up in the power of God against those onsets which would carry him away, had he had no inward support. So, when our heart rises up with all its base desires, when this filthy puddle is stirred up, and sin is presented as something sweet and delicious and alluring to our carnal appetite, the eye of faith sees the hook concealed beneath this bait; the ear of faith hears the footfall of the enemy behind the bushes, trampling upon the leaves; and the mouth of faith begins to cry to the Lord, that He would deliver the soul from these traps and snares.

Faith is like the modesty of a chaste virgin, that recoils from any look or gesture that would seek to draw her aside into anything improper or unbecoming; for she has a chaste principle in her bosom, which turns away immediately from the least approach to what is immodest; but the street-pacing harlot courts that which the modest woman recoils from. So, a heart which is unrenewed, one which is in all its natural enmity to, and alienation from God, woos sin, lusts after sin, delights in sin, courts, and is ready to embrace the first sin that comes in the way; but in a living soul there is a secret recoil, a holy fear, a godly awe, a crying out to the Lord (as a damsel against her ravisher,) De 22:27 that He would deliver us from the violence of sin, that He would not suffer us to be overpowered and defiled by it.

Faith also acts in another way. It not merely discovers, being "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," the baits, the gins, the traps, the pitfalls, that are spread for the feet of the unwary traveller, but faith knows what it is to have recourse to a throne of grace for help, strength and direction; faith knows what it is in some measure to realize the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness, and when it is utterly helpless in self, and cannot resist the temptation, to flee to the Lord and to hide itself in Him. Thus faith has recourse to the Lord in seasons of extremity and distress; and in this way a poor, trembling child of God, who has a spirit of faith and godly fear in his heart, is preserved whilst presumptuous

professors are cast away.

Again; it is through the medium of faith, that the Lord communicates all strength to the soul. Have we not found it to be so? When our faith was weak, we were like Samson with his locks cut; we went forth as at other times, and lo! all our strength was gone; we could not stand up against one temptation. But when the Lord was pleased to succour us, to strengthen us with strength in the inner man, and to minister grace out of Christ to our souls, through the medium of that faith which He Himself had kindled, then there was a power, a wisdom, and an ability, communicated to the soul, to stand up against temptation, and not to be overcome and carried away by it.

One shall say, "Do the children of God always stand in these trying seasons? Are they never carried away by any temptation? Oh, if this be the case, I am no child of God at all" says he "for I am continually carried away; if I am not overcome by sin openly and outwardly so as to disgrace my profession, I am often carried away inwardly, and I feel that I have no more power to stand up against the least sin, than I have power to raise the dead." Now faith comes in here also. When you have been thus entangled, are you easy? Do you feel no guilt? Does conscience tell no dreadful tale? Is your mind perfectly calm and unruffled? Is there not inward distress, poignant suffering? Are there not tears rolling down your cheeks, heavings and gaspings of your groaning soul under a load of self-condemnation and self-abhorrence, on account of your base departures from God? "Yes," say you, "when I have been entangled in sin (and I confess I have often been entangled in it, base wretch that I am), I felt that I could not roll it under my tongue like a sweet morsel; I could not act the part of the adulteress that is spoken of in the Proverbs, who eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. Oh, it was a hell to me to have been entangled in sin; it broke my bones, it troubled my spirit, it filled me with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before God." Whence arose those feelings? Was it not through faith that you realised the eye of

God in secret upon you? Was it not through faith that you realised the hatred of God against the sin you were entangled in? Was it not by faith that self-loathing and self-abhorrence were kindled in your soul? Was it not through faith that you were enabled to make confession of your sin before God? Was it not through faith that some balmy drops of atoning blood fell upon your conscience? Was it not through faith that you received some testimony that, base as you are, God had not given you over to a reprobate mind, a hardened heart, and a seared conscience? Then you perceive that faith is as necessary to bring back a soul that backslides from God, as to prevent a soul from backsliding from Him; and he knows little of his own heart, little of the temptations of sin, and little of inward slips and falls, who knows not what it is to groan and sigh before God as a base wretch, that has been continually entangled in things hateful to God, and in his right mind hateful to his own soul.

Thus God keeps His people through faith; He does not keep them through presumption, nor does He keep them through vain confidence, nor does He keep them through unbelief, nor does He keep them through doubts and fears, but He keeps them through the exercise of that blessed grace which He Himself has implanted in their soul. And if you and I, brethren, have been kept up to the present day, since the Lord was first pleased to quicken our souls into spiritual life, we can trace up every act whereby we were kept, and every act whereby we were restored when we fell, to the operations of living faith in our souls; and were it not for the operations of living faith in our souls under the influences of the Holy Spirit, long ago should we of faith made shipwreck.

“But,” say some, “I do not understand this sort of keeping; the keeping I want is never to have anything to do with trouble, and exercises, and temptations, and sufferings.” Now God never did keep His people so. We read that they shall “glorify Him in the fires;” that He hath “chosen them in the furnace of affliction;” that “when they pass through the waters He will be with them, and

through the rivers they shall not overflow them;" that He "brings the third part to pass through the fire," and that "through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom." That man, then, and he only, knows what it is to be kept by the power of God through faith, who in his own self is continually prone to fall, independently of that keeping. He only knows the mercy of being kept, who feels that he falls every moment when the everlasting arms are not sensibly under him. He only knows the mercy of being kept who has been ready to weep tears of blood, because he has inwardly or outwardly fallen. He only knows the happiness, the blessedness, the privilege of being kept, who knows that if God did not hold him in by His powerful hand, he should launch at once into the vilest of sins, and bring disgrace upon his profession altogether. He only knows what it is to be kept who has to cry, and sigh, and groan unto God to preserve him from the base workings of his own heart, from the awful temptations and ensnaring delusions of Satan, and from the baits and allurements that the world is spreading in his path. And none but he can know what it is to be kept by the power of God through faith who is not deeply and inwardly persuaded that were God to leave him for a single moment he should fall out of the arms of God into a never-ending hell.

The children of God, then, receive the keeping of God, not as a dry doctrine, as spoken by the mouth of Peter, but they receive it as a most blessed privilege when God is pleased to indulge them with the sweet persuasion that He has kept them, is keeping them, and will keep them evermore. And oh! friends, what happiness or pleasure can there be equal to feeling the everlasting arms underneath? Oh, it is not resting on the dry doctrine that God's everlasting arms are underneath His church that will satisfy a living soul, but it is to feel those arms spread underneath us; to lean with all our weight upon those arms, and to find daily that those arms are sufficient to support and hold us up, however weak, and helpless, and feeble we be in ourselves. It is thus that "the lame take the prey;" that the feeble Jacob wrestles and overcomes; and that whilst the youths

faint and are weary and the young men utterly fall, those that wait upon the Lord renew their strength, mount up on wings as eagles, run and are not weary, walk and do not faint. God will powerfully convince all His dear family of their weakness and helplessness, that He may teach them sweetly and experimentally that all their strength is in Him, and may thus bring them to know by blessed teaching the sweetness of being kept by feeling that nothing but the hand of God could keep such rebellious wretches as they feel themselves to be.

If I were to go through this chapel and put my hand upon the first person who would fail, I will tell you who the man is: he who thinks he can stand in his own strength. And if I were to go through this chapel and put my hand upon him that is least likely to fall, it would be he who is so deeply sensible of his own weakness, his own helplessness, and his own impotency to keep himself, that he fears he shall fall before this night comes on, and yet is secretly crying and groaning to the Lord that He would not suffer him to be tempted beyond what he is able, but would with the temptation make a way to escape, that he may be able to bear it.

Thus, then, all the living family are kept by the power of God. The Lord has enlisted all His attributes in their behalf. If we want a person to be our friend, we want to know what means he has of befriending us. If we are deeply in debt, and he comes forward to be our surety in order that we may not go to gaol, the inquiry will be as to the length of his purse, the amount of his property; and if it is found that he has property far more than would pay our debts, then his bail is taken. Now the Lord has engaged all His power, whereby to hold up His people from falling; implying these two things, that they need all His power to keep them, and that all His power will be exerted on their behalf. But if the temptations, and dangers, and difficulties that stand in our way to glory, are so great and pressing, that (so to speak) it takes all the power of God to keep a man from being overcome by them, what can that man know of being "kept by the power of God," who has never felt him-

self such a headlong wretch towards evil, that nothing but the arm of God could possibly hold him in? But the case is proportioned to the remedy, and the remedy is proportioned to the case. The weakness of man is so great, that he needs all the power of God to keep him; and the power of God is so great that it is never exerted ineffectually.

Again, we want something more than power, we want love. Look at the mother, all whose affections are fixed upon her offspring; she often lacks power to keep them, to preserve them from danger, but does she ever lack love? And if her power were equal to her love, would not her offspring be preserved from every danger? You that are spiritual mothers, and have ungodly children, what would you not, if the love of your bosom could speak, and you were armed with power as well as love, do for the preservation and salvation of the fruit of your womb? But in behalf of the elect love is enlisted, as well as power; for the Lord has loved His elect with an everlasting love, and all the affection of His heart is engaged to keep them as much as His power.

Again, there is the faithfulness of God. If a friend has passed his word that he will afford me relief when I go to him, if he has bound himself by a solemn promise that I shall not apply to him in vain, and if I know him to be a man of uprightness and integrity, I am sure that he will not break his word, but that when the time of need comes he will afford that help which he has promised. So the promise-keeping Jehovah has covenanted His everlasting faithfulness to His word, as well as His power and His love; and if it would be a disgrace to a mortal man, to a fallen sinner, who had passed his word, not to adhere to it, will the faithful truth keeping God ever suffer one of His words to fall to the ground? Has He said, and will He not do it? Has He spoken, and shall it not come to pass? The elect of God, then, are garrisoned by all the power of God, by all the love of God, and by all the faithfulness of God; they are kept in this city which hath walls and bulwarks, fortified by God Himself against every foe.

The elect are kept “unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time”. This may apply to that “salvation” which will be revealed when Christ “comes a second time without sin unto salvation.” But I think also it may well be applied to that salvation which is revealed in the soul; as we read a little lower down, “Be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Now the revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of all things does not bring grace, it brings glory; but the revelation of Jesus Christ in the soul, under the manifestations of His Holy Spirit, does bring grace with it. I think then, without wresting the word, we may say that this “salvation ready to be revealed” is the salvation which is manifested to the soul by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Those who are kept by the power of God through faith are often in their minds troubled and anxious, and fearing whether this salvation will ever reach their souls, whether they may not prove castaways; whether the work upon their heart is genuine, whether they are under divine teachings. But the Lord says they are kept by His power, through faith unto salvation, “shut up unto the faith which is to be revealed,” kept as in this garrisoned city, until salvation shall come in all its glory, and sweetness, and bliss, and blessedness into their heart, preserved and encompassed by all the attributes of God from making shipwreck of faith, until “they receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.”

Well then, poor doubting, distressed, fearing, guilty sinner! This promise is for thee. Thy soul is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; thy character and thy name are contained here. And it is a promise suitable to you; yea, it is a promise suitable to us all. Suitable to us when we meet together, suitable to us when absent from each other; suitable to those who stay, suitable to those who go; suitable for town, suitable for country; suitable for the busy metropolis, suitable for the retired country fields; suitable for a child of God in a state of trial and temptations, and suitable when he enjoys a temporary respite from them; suitable for him at ease, suitable for him in distress; suitable for him at war, suitable

for him at peace; suitable for him when the cannons roar and the earth trembles, and suitable for him when he seems to have no enemy near, for the enemy then may be approaching by stratagem. Yea, friends, could you point out a single moment when this promise is not suitable to you, that moment would be the very moment in which the promise would be wanted by you most. Could you ever arrive at such a spot as to say, "Now I want the promise no more," that very feeling would show that you were on the brink of a fall, and therefore never needed the promise so much as then.

It is our mercy, if God has quickened us by the Holy Spirit, and raised us up to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to have an interest in this precious word—"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." And what better wish can I now leave with you at the close of my present visit, than that you may be "kept by the power of God;" kept from evil that it may not grieve you, kept from the errors of the day, kept from the wiles of Satan, kept from the deceits of your own hearts, kept from the thousand snares, known and unknown, seen and unseen, hidden and discovered, that are spread before your feet? What better wish can I leave behind me or take with me than this, that we may realize in our souls that we are personally and individually interested in these blessed words, in this sacred promise from the mouth of God Himself—"Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?" If really we are interested in these words, the Lord will keep us during the few remaining days or years of our pilgrimage; He will hold us up that we shall not fall, and will present us before His face in glory.

28 THE ROAD TO CHRIST'S TABLE AND CHRIST'S THRONE

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, , at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth

August 15, 1841

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my

temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Luke 22:28, 29, 30

Many persons profess to believe that in theory which they deny in practice. For instance all who call themselves Christians profess that we can only be saved by the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when we come to what that salvation is; when we come to explain in what manner that salvation takes effect, we find that the very persons who profess to believe that salvation is only through the blood and obedience of the Lamb, are mixing up human merit and creature exertions with it. So again, few who call themselves Christians would deny that the children of God should walk in the footsteps of Jesus; that he left us "an example" that we should follow his steps; that only so far as we follow him in the regeneration, only so far as we have the mind of Christ, and have his image stamped upon us, are we rightly called by his name. But when we come to define and minutely explain what it is to walk in the footsteps of Christ and what it is to have the mind, the spirit, and the image of Christ, we find that men differ as widely in opinion as to what these solemn realities are, almost as much as they differ from one another in stature, features, and complexion.

But every living soul will be taught sooner or later by the Holy Ghost, each in his measure to walk in Christ's footsteps. Whatever delusions it may be for a time wrapped up in, whatever gins, traps, or snares it may for a while be entangled with, whatever darkness of mind, unbelief of heart, carnality, worldliness, or confusion it may be for a season perplexed by, every living soul will, sooner or later, be brought to walk as Jesus walked.

The words from which I hope to speak this evening, were addressed by the Lord of life and glory when he was taking his farewell of his mourning disciples. His heart seemed open at this

special season to tell them the secrets that were lodged in his bosom—and he dropped most precious words of instruction and counsel, not merely for their benefit but for ours also; not merely for their edification, out for the edification of the whole church of God to whom the Scriptures should ever come. Not seeing fit at this moment to point out Judas especially, he addresses himself to his disciples as the twelve and says: “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

We will the Lord enabling us, take up these words in the precise order in which they lie before us, desiring to handle them in such an experimental way as the blessed Spirit may direct us. The Lord of life and glory when he sojourned here below had temptations. We read and a remarkable passage it is Heb 5:8 that “though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered!” nay, that so violent were his temptations, and so poignant his sufferings, that “in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” The whole of the Lord’s life here below from the cradle to the cross was a life of temptation, trial, and suffering. He came into this world for the express purpose of suffering, it was a part of his mediatorial work; a holy body was prepared for him Heb 10:5 that it might agonise and die; and a spotless soul, that it might be “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Mt 26:38

1. The word “temptations” in the text applies not only to what is generally understood by the term temptations, that is bufferings from Satan, assaults from the prince of darkness, but the word is sometimes used in the Scripture to signify trials. Thus it is said “God tempted Abraham;” Ge 22:1 but he could not tempt Abraham in the way of bringing evil before him.—God is not the author of sin God forbid! He cannot tempt his people with evil: he cannot intro-

duce sin into man's heart. The apostle James speaks most decisively on this point. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" Jas 1:13 It is an awful error—a damnable doctrine, that God is the author of sin; and all the passages brought forward to prove it are misunderstood or perverted. "The evil," which God is said "to create," Isa 45:7 and "to do" Am 3:6 is not moral evil, but affliction and chiefly, as is evident from the context, the scourge of war. "I make peace, and create evil." He brings the olive branch, and he brings the sword. "Shall a trumpet" the trumpet of war "be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, not in a man's heart, but the scourge of war, famine or disease in the streets and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets." But when and where did he reveal to them that either he created sin in the first instance, or ever now infuses it into man's heart? Such a doctrine could find no place in hell itself. The devils know too well that they were created pure and that the holy Jehovah did not make them what they now are. A doctrine so insulting to God, so blasphemous a lie, can only lodge in the corrupt understanding of heretics. When he tempted Abraham, he tried him, for that is the meaning of the words—put his faith love and obedience to the trial. So the Old Testament saints, of whom the world was not worthy, are said Heb 11:37, to have been "tempted," where from the connection it evidently means were "tried." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, "tried" by persecutions to abandon their profession were slain with the sword." And thus the word "temptations" in the text includes, I believe, not merely temptations—properly so called; that is temptations from Satan as the prince of darkness, but also what we understand more particularly by the word, "trials."

The disciples, as followers of their Lord, had many trials to encounter—such as the scoffing and jeers of a persecuting world, as well as the opposition enmity and hatred of the professing church.

The Scribes and Pharisees, who made up the bulk of the professing church in the time of the Lord, treated all who professed themselves his followers much as their descendants in modern times treat the true disciples of Jesus now—they put them out of the synagogue, and loaded their names with contempt and infamy. This heavy trial the disciples endured, and continued with Jesus partaking of his reproach. We read of the stoney ground hearers who receive the word with joy and endure for a while, but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately they are offended and fall away. The disciples were the reverse of this. But some may go farther than the stoney ground hearers: they may resemble those of whom we read, Joh 6, who convinced by his miracles believed him to be the Messiah, and professed to follow him as his disciples, until he told them that unless they eat his flesh and drank his blood, they had no life in them. As long as he wrought miracles in feeding their bodies and healing their sicknesses, they followed him in spite of reproach and persecution; but when he came to set forth the mysteries of vital godliness, and the necessity of an experimental religion, “from that time they went back, and walked no more with him.” Joh 6:66 But the disciples weathered every storm—persecution without, and infidelity within, the malice of foes, and the treachery of false friends. They continued to stand by their Lord however hated, despised, and persecuted; they continued to hear their share of those outward trials with which he was loaded, their measure of that reproach which was heaped upon him, and to be hated of all men for his name’s sake. Thus they continued with him in his temptations, not drawn aside by smiles, not driven aside by frowns, not terrified by the threatenings of the professing church stamping them as madmen, or antinomians, disciples of a glutton and a wine-bibber, not led away by their own self-righteous hearts, not beat back by the difficulties and trials of the way; but taught by that Spirit, which Peter was so blessedly strengthened by when he said, “Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life,” they cleaved to their Lord in faith

and affection, upheld by his power from falling away, for "those whom the Father gave him he kept," Joh 17:12 and endured to the end.

But though the word "temptations" includes outward trials, yet it more specially refers to those of an inward nature.

Satan brought all his artillery to bear upon the Son of God. He was permitted to try him to the utmost. It was the purpose of God, that his well-beloved Son should be tempted like as we are; and if you are God's there has not a single temptation beset you, which did not beset the Lord of life and glory. Are we tempted sometimes to doubt a God of providence? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted, when Satan said to him, "Command these stones to be made bread." Are we tempted to vain confidence and presumption? The Lord of life and glory was similarly tempted, when the prince of darkness said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence." Are we often tempted to disbelieve that we are the children of God, and exercised at times with distressing suspicions and fears lest we have only a profession of religion, without its experimental power in our hearts? Satan brought the same temptation against the Lord, when he said, "IF thou be the Son of God:" as Hart says. "O what an if was there!" Are we tempted to turn our backs upon the Lord for the sake of what the world offers? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted when Satan said that he would give him all that he presented before his eyes when he took him upon the mountain top. Are we ever tempted to turn from the true God and worship idols? The Lord of life and glory was similarly tempted when Satan with his infernal pride, and cursed impudence proposed to the Son of God to worship him. The Son of God worship Satan? But some shall say, 'was Jesus tempted like as I am? How can that be? He was pure, spotless and holy; but I am full of corruption from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet. The Lord of life and glory had a perfect, unfallen nature, a holy human body, and a holy human soul, taken into union with Deity; but I have a fallen nature

defiled in body and polluted in soul. Can there be a resemblance in our temptations?' I would ask what is it in you that feels the burden of temptation when Satan injects his blasphemies into your mind? Have you not a principle within you which recoils with horror from the temptation, when he seeks to infuse into your mind his own infernal enmity and malice against God? Is there not a something in you which is grieved, I was going to say tortured by these fiery darts. Is it not the new nature? and is not that nature spotless and holy? Is it not born of God, and therefore as holy as God is holy? and pure as God is pure? Thus just in the same way as your pure and holy nature that is born of God is grieved and distressed by the fiery darts of Satan, so was the holy soul of the Lord of life and glory ten thousand times more grieved and tortured by the temptations of Satan presented before his pure and spotless mind. The disciples did not forsake their Lord, though so sorely buffeted with these temptations, nay more, they, according to the measure of their faith, partook of them individually and personally, suffering as well as sympathising with him, and wounded, though in a far less degree, by arrows from the same bow. And thus disciples now continue with Jesus in his temptations by suffering as members with their covenant head walking the greater part of them in a daily path of trouble and sorrow—daily tempted by Satan, by the world, and by their own evil hearts; day by day tempted to do everything from which their spiritual nature recoils; day by day tempted to do things which are hateful in the eyes of a pure God, and to them too when in their right mind.

But if those only are disciples who are exercised by temptations, and continue to endure them as fellow-sufferers with Christ what a two-edged sword is this to cut off thousands of presumptuous professors! What hundreds of professing people are there who never never groaned beneath temptation in their lives! what hundreds who fight with bitter sarcasm, and "their tongue as an arrow shot out," against the people of God who are exercised with temptations! What hundreds who would strip out of the Bible every line

that speaks of temptations as lying in the path to glory! But this text, as a sharp two-edged sword, cuts off every one professing to be a follower of Christ, who knows not temptations, and continues not with Jesus in his temptations.

2. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." For whom is this kingdom appointed? For the presumptuous, the proud, the hypocritical, and the self-righteous? no not for these." "I appoint unto you"—you that "have continued with me in my temptations;" you that are tempted and exercised: you that walk in the paths of tribulation; you that follow in the print of the footsteps of a suffering Jesus; you that know the painful exercises of temptation, and yet are strengthened with strength in your inner man, to "resist even unto blood, striving against sin" so as not to be carried away or overwhelmed by it. What kingdom is this? It is the same kingdom that the Father hath given to Jesus. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Now what is the kingdom which God the Father appointed unto his dear Son? Is it to sit upon a throne like an earthly monarch? To wear a diadem, and carry a sceptre? "My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world," John 18:36 The kingdom of the Lord of life and glory was to make an end of sin, to abolish death, and destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; to reign spiritually in the hearts of his chosen; to be king and Lord in Sion, and to rule over the willing affections of his subjects; a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; a kingdom of grace set up by the Blessed Spirit in the heart; a spiritual kingdom which none can see or enter into but those that are born of the Spirit. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and consists in having a people to see him as he is, a people to glorify him, a people to love him, and a people for him to love. A kingdom cannot be the same to sovereign and subject, when it is of an earthly and temporal nature. Were the earthly monarch to impart his kingdom to his subjects, it would cease to be a kingdom, and become a republic. But not so with a spiritual

kingdom. Jesus does not diminish his own grace by imparting it to his people, nor lessen his own joy by shedding it abroad in their hearts, nor sully his own glory by communicating of it to them. The sun has lost no light nor warmth by the countless millions of rays that have issued from it since it was first created. Nor does the glorious Sun of righteousness lose the fulness that is in him by communicating of his grace and glory. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, unexhausted and inexhaustible. Then this kingdom which he appoints to his tried and tempted disciples is the kingdom of grace in the heart; the kingdom of God in the soul; the presence of Jesus Within; the manifestation of that kingdom which is spoken of in Daniel Da 2:44, as set up on the ruins of all the other kingdoms, when it has broken them in pieces. Thus temptations prepare the way for the kingdom; temptations are the necessary and indispensable forerunners of the kingdom. Just as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands fell upon the feet of the image, and "brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold," "so do temptations, falling upon our standing in self, break to pieces that image of our idolatry, and make our pride, our wisdom, our strength, our holiness, our righteousness, and all our fleshly religion to "become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors." Thus temptations pave the way for the manifestation and "setting up of that internal kingdom which shall never be destroyed, but shall stand for ever and ever." Temptations, like a sharp lancet, let out the life blood of that awful presumption which has so inflated and puffed up the Calvinistic churches. Pressed down by temptations, the soul cries and groans that Jesus would himself say to these winds and waves, "Peace, be still." By these temptations, however, does the Lord of the temple, as with a whip of small cords, drive out the money-changers, and spoil their trafficking, by pouring out their money, and overthrowing their tables in the heart. We read, that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"—that is the kingdom of grace as experimentally revealed in the soul. There is no entering into it, so as

to know it, see it, feel it, realise it, and experience the divine effects of it but through tribulation. Temptation and tribulation are not the kingdom, but they so lie in the road that there is no entering into the kingdom without passing through them. The mud and mire that lie in the road cannot be said to be the way, but they so lie in the way that he who travels by it must travel through them. Whatever high-sounding words men may use about the liberty of the gospel, and however confident they may be of their standing in that liberty, their liberty is licentiousness and delusion, unless they have had the kingdom of God set up in their souls by the Holy Ghost. And if they have had the inward manifestation of that kingdom, they are acquainted with temptation. No untried, unexercised professor, then, ever knew anything about this inward kingdom of peace and joy in believing. His peace is that of the strong man armed who keeps the palace, and whose goods are in peace.

But again wherever this kingdom is set up it produces visible effects. Do they know then anything of this kingdom who are slaves to lust? Do they experience the power of this kingdom who are wrapped up in presumption, or engrossed with covetousness, or mixed up with dead professors? If a man has the kingdom of God manifested in him, he is more or less a new creature, It has separated him from a world lying dead in profession, and brought him into some measure of communion with the Lord of life and glory.

The subjects of this kingdom will be continually shot at from every quarter. The devil with all his infernal malice will vex and harass the souls of those who are partakers of this kingdom. Professing churches, having a name to live while dead before God, having a form of godliness whilst they inwardly and outwardly deny the power thereof, will shoot bitter arrows against all who are the subjects of this kingdom. Heady, notional Calvinists, with liberty on their tongue and bondage in their heart, conscience-seared Antinomians, easy slipshod formalists, all of every grade and class who

hate and despise a feeling experimental religion, and every one in a profession who has a secret conviction that he knows nothing of divine teachings and manifestations, will bend their bow openly or secretly against those who continue with Jesus in his temptations, and to whom he appoints an internal kingdom of grace and power. Nay some of the keenest and most envenomed shafts are drawn from the quiver of a man's own infidel, unbelieving nature. But the Son of God has appointed his tempted followers a kingdom, and it rests upon eternal decree and covenant faithfulness.

3. But there are two circumstances connected with the experimental possession of this kingdom. The first is an eating and drinking at Christ's table in his kingdom. The table of the Lord's supper is merely typical of this, merely a figure of the table here spoken of. This table seems to point out two things—the foretaste of bliss below, and the full enjoyment of glory above. As the kingdom of Christ begins below, and is consummated above, commences with grace and ends in glory, so the table at which the subjects of his kingdom eat and drink, is spread below and spread above. This table then, viewed as spread on earth, is a feast which he sets out for his friends, according to those words, "Eat O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly O beloved." And thus he says to his disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what the Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Joh 15:15. This table is spread with every blessing that a poor, needy, naked soul can desire. There is blood to purge away sin; righteousness to justify us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; grace sufficient for all our necessities; strength for all our infirmities; power to help us in all our difficulties; glory provided that we may see his glory and be changed into the same image. But we must come to this table poor, hungry, needy, naked and distressed. We read Lu 14:16 of a certain man who made a great supper and bade many. But who came to this feast? All the rich and possessed of property "with one consent began to make

excuse." One had bought a piece of ground and wanted to see it, to examine its present state and capabilities of improvement. He had no mind to come. Another, a wealthy farmer, had just bought five yoke of oxen, and he wished to go and see whether they were worth the money and would suit his purpose. He prayed to be excused. A third had just taken a wife, and he could not leave her to come. Their tastes, desires and dispositions were not that way. Want and hunger had not bitten them nor sharpened their appetite for the feast. And who came in to partake of the supper? The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind?

So it is spiritually. This table is spread for those who have an appetite; but this appetite is only produced by temptations. It is spiritually as it is naturally. Labour sharpens appetite. Thus those only that labour under powerful temptations, that toil and sweat by reason of the difficulties of the way, the straitness of the path, the ruggedness of the road, have an appetite for this heavenly table. It is the way-worn pilgrims only who want to feed upon the blood and love of the Lamb, to feast their souls upon his glorious righteousness, and have their hearts blessedly established in the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. Those only who are poor in spirit, who hunger and thirst after heavenly food, and whose longing souls cry out after the living God, really want to sit as excepted guests at the marriage table, clothed in the garments of imputed righteousness. Such as these who have been brought down to the starving point, cannot be satisfied, like the full-fed, with merely looking at the provisions of the gospel, as set forth in the promises of Scripture, but they want to feast upon them, so as to enjoy their sweetness, and derive solid nutriment and strength from them. The Lord's supper, to receive which many deem to be the turn and substance of all religion and almost a passport to heaven, is but a type and shadow of this spiritual feast. Though when received in faith, it is a blessed ordinance of God, it is but a feeble and imperfect figure of feeding at that table which is spiritually provided for the poor and needy. But there is a

table spread above, as well as a table spread below, and the guests at the one are the only admitted guests at the other. The same food is set upon both tables, for the one is but the foretaste of the other. Love is the provision below, and love is the provision above. But here there are only drops and crumbs from the heavenly table, and these rarely and sparingly given; above, the full banquet is spread. Here sickness often spoils the appetite, and unbelief drops the food midway between the table and the mouth; there nothing intervenes to mar eternal and inexhaustible enjoyment. Men may talk about the joys of heaven and awfully delude themselves by thinking they shall have a part in them; but none will sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but the bride, the Lamb's wife Re 19:7, that has endured temptation, and come off more than conqueror, through him who loved her and gave himself for her.

4. But there is another promise annexed to continuing with Christ in his temptations. "And sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The word throne does not imply anything of an earthly nature, nor point to any temporal dignity. Much has been said, and many passages of Scripture have been brought forward to prove that the saints of Christ will possess an earthly kingdom, and sit on thrones of temporal power and authority. But what comfort could it give the living soul according to the views of those who thus literally interpret the unfulfilled prophecies, to sit upon an earthly throne? Would the prospect of some future earthly power and dignity satisfy the longing desires of the heart, make Christ precious, and take off the burden of sin, or bear the soul up under the storms and tempests of the present life? No; what the living soul desires is to sit in heavenly places in Christ, to lean his head upon Christ's bosom, and be favoured with sweet and holy communion with the Lord of life and glory.

These thrones, then, are not thrones of earthly dominion. Jesus says Re 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." From this promise of Jesus we learn two things.

1. That to sit on a throne, is not limited to the disciples who followed him whilst on earth. The promise is to him that overcomes.
2. We learn from if that this throne is not of an earthly, temporal nature. Does Jesus sit on such a throne now? Is it not a spiritual throne, a dominion of grace and glory? And as the table begins below, so does the throne begin below. On earth commences the foretaste of dominion, as well as the foretaste of joy.

Thus, when temptations have pressed hard upon the soul, when these temptations have whetted his appetite for spiritual food, when the Holy Ghost has brought him as a guest to the spiritual banquet, and he sits at Christ's table eating and drinking spiritually of the flesh and blood of the Son of God, then he sits upon a throne, inheriting a measure of the glory which is hereafter to be revealed. He that conquers sin, denies self, overcomes the world, and resists Satan, sits spiritually on a throne, and, as he can only thus conquer in Christ's strength, he may be said to sit with Christ on his throne. Christ conquered through suffering, destroyed death by dying, abolished the law by undergoing its last penalty, dethroned Satan by being made a little lower than the angels, put an end to sin by bearing it in his own body on the tree, and overcame the world by being crucified by its princes and rulers. He conquered by weakness, and overcame by suffering. And thus his disciples by suffering with him reign with him, and sit upon his throne of grace here and glory hereafter, by continuing with him in his temptations, and by being delivered by his power out of them.

But they are said, in the text, to sit on a throne for a specific purpose—to judge the “twelve tribes of Israel.”

This cannot be literally true. The genealogies of the twelve tribes are lost; their very names are now unknown. The ten tribes were carried away into captivity by Shalmaneser King of Assyria, 2Ki 17:23, and never returned; and the two remaining tribes were dispersed, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, all over the world; so that the twelve tribes no longer exist literally

and nationally. As, then, the table at which the disciples are fed is a spiritual feast, and the throne on which they sit is a spiritual throne, so must the persons whom they judge, and the judgment which they exercise be taken spiritually also.

And therefore these "twelve tribes of Israel" must signify the spiritual family of God; or the professing church of Christ here below. The twelve tribes of Israel seem to have some spiritual reference to the different experience of the people of God. All the children of God are not led in precisely the same path: and though there is a family resemblance in all, yet the features of the countenance differ in each. Some are plunged at first into deep convictions and soul distress; others learn the evil of sin and their own state as sinners more slowly and gradually. Some have to wade through many sore temporal afflictions and troubles; others pass through life with a smaller measure of temporal trials. Some have a deep acquaintance with their own hearts, a sound judgment in truth, and a keen discernment of men and things, whilst others of the living family seem to know little of themselves, and less of others. Some are sweetly delivered by a blessed revelation of the Son of God, so as to bring them out fully into the blessedness of the gospel. Others are delivered less powerfully and clearly, and have much difficulty to make their calling and election sure. Some are blessed with strong faith and a large measure of filial confidence! others are well nigh consumed by doubts and fears all their lives. Some are pardoned at first, and their earliest days are their best; others receive their pardon late, and their last days are their brightest. Some are much preserved in a consistent walk all their days; and others so totter and reel, as to distress their own souls, and wound the cause of God. Some hear and receive the truth from their first outset; and others are brought to see and believe it only toward the close of their days. Some breathe forth their happy souls in the full triumph of faith; and others, who have seen the Sun of righteousness, die with a cloud resting upon their minds.

Thus, the people of God seem to be divided into tribes, for we

do not find every individual in the church of God to have an experience peculiar to himself, but that there are classes into which the whole family may be divided; the experience of the individual being in its leading features the experience of the class. It is, then, these tribes of the spiritual Israel, these classes of the one great school, these families of the holy nation, these divisions of the grand army of the church militant, that the disciples of Christ were to judge. That is, those who have continued with Christ in his temptations, and have been raised from the dunghill to sit upon the throne, possess thereby a secret court of judgment, whereby they are able to pass a decision upon the experience of God's people. They have weights and scales into which they put all professors, and thus sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. We must hear in mind that "all are not Israel which are of Israel;" and therefore, in judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they will distinguish between the spiritual seed of Abraham, and those that merely call themselves by his name. Their judgment is not final nor infallible, and consists more in discernment than in passing sentence, according to those words, "He that is spiritual judgeth or discerneth, margin, all things;" 1Co 2:15. But in our day of universal philanthropy, every minister that stands up to distinguish between the living and the dead in Jerusalem, is wondered at for his singularity, and cried down for his bad and bitter spirit. But I believe that the work of a spiritually taught, and divinely commissioned minister is to do what the spirit here describes: "To sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" so to enter into the experience of the living family, and so to detect and lay bare all imitations and counterfeits, as to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But this spirit of discernment, whereby he sits judging the twelve tribes of Israel, will bring with it a heavy reproach. If he will class together professors and living souls; if he will take into the arms of universal charity all who say they believe in Jesus Christ, and receive as brethren, without any doubt or scruple, all that hold the same doctrines, and are of "the same

faith and order," he is praised and admired. But if he comes with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, and thrusts it up to the hilt in rotten hearts, if he speaks to a man's conscience, if he traces out the work of grace upon the soul, if he pulls down rotten props and vain expectations, he must endure what his master bore before him, to be called a devil, and mad, and suffer the reproach of men, and the scorn of the professing church.

It is not the tribes of the spiritual Israel, but the tribes of the professing Israel whose enmity and spleen is excited by the judgment he passes on them. He having passed through temptation, having continued with the Lord in his temptations, having received a measure of Christ's kingdom in his heart, being exalted to sit in some feeble measure with Christ on his throne, is enabled to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, by bringing men up to the standard of experience, and to the teachings of the Holy Ghost in the heart. And therefore an experimental ministry will always bring with it a cross, will always be hated and opposed in every town and village into which it comes.

When a man once begins in the strength of the Lord to pull down the lofty professor, and exalt the humble and meek, to feed the hungry with good things, and send the rich empty away, when he boldly contends against all creature religion, and declares that he who dies without being taught by the Holy Ghost to know sin and salvation will die under the wrath of God, he will immediately be set down as a man of a bitter and censorious spirit. A thousand tongues and pens will rise up against him, and false rumours and reproaches will be launched against him from every side. But let him do the work of the Lord faithfully, and he will bring him safely through them all.

Now, friends, can we bear to be put up in the scale? If you have the right religion you need not fear to be weighed up. What tradesman is it that trembles when he sees the surveyors of weights and measures going round the town? Is it he who has honest weights upon his counter, or he whose measures are short and whose

weights are light? Who fears the revenue cutter but the smuggler? who shrinks from the police but the thief? who trembles at the judge but the felon? So the dishonest in religion, whose own consciences, when not seared as with a hot iron, testify against them, may well tremble under a heart-searching ministry; may well turn away saying—"This man is too bitter and uncharitable in spirit for me to hear." It is not his spirit that gives offence, but it is his discerning and firm finger pressing upon a rotten spot in your heart that makes you wince. But if God has made you honest and sincere before him, you are saying—Let my religion be weighed up; I know that one day I shall be put in the balance, and stand before the Judge of quick and dead. All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom I have to do. O let me be tried in this life, and not cast in the life to come. Let me have righteousness laid to the line and equity to the plummet here, that "the trial of my faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

I will just recapitulate and run over a few particulars of the work which I have been endeavouring to trace out from the text. Let us bear in mind that the disciples at this period were very weak in faith. They had received a measure of divine teaching; they had experienced a measure of the Spirit's work in their hearts; hut they had not been baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That was reserved for the day of Pentecost. They knew, however temptation; they knew what it was to be hated by the world, to be cast out by the professing church, to be shot at by Satan, to be exercised and distressed in their own souls. They knew also what it was to receive some measure of Christ's kingdom into their hearts, for it was the grace and beauty of Christ which attracted their affections. "Lord to whom shall we go," said Peter for them all, "thou hast the words of eternal life."

We see here the path in which the redeemed walk. Let us try our standing by it. Has your religion then, friends, ever yet entailed upon you the hatred of the world? the scorn of the profess-

ing church? the malace of Satan? and the enmity of those who have a name to live while they are dead? Are you a people separate from the world? Is your name a butt for malace to shoot at? If not, you are not followers of the persecuted and despised Nazarene. If not, you know nothing of following in the footsteps of him who was despised and rejected of men, and whose name was a by-word among the people. But what know you of distressing temptations? Have you ever been tempted to infidelity,—to despair—to presumption—to everything hateful and horrible, and yet in the strength of the Lord God, have been enabled to fight and “resist even unto blood striving against sin?” The Lord has appointed for such a kingdom “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” ‘O,’ says some poor tried soul, ‘I want to get at this kingdom. I can follow you well enough when you talk of trials and temptations. I can go along with you well enough when you talk of the pantings of the soul after Christ—how the soul is exercised with fears of perishing—how one tosses upon the restless midnight couch, panting and groaning that the Lord would reveal himself with power. And when you speak of hungering and thirsting after righteousness—crying to God from a burthened heart, under a distressing sense of guilt. I can go along with you in all this. But when you preach that there is a kingdom, and that that kingdom is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; I stop short at the outer door, I cannot get in. I stand knocking, but he opens not the palace. I stand in the cold, but he sends no message for me to come into his chamber. I cry and pray, but he seems deaf to all my intreaties.

Now look at the disciples. Even after the Lord had departed and given them the promise of a Comforter, had they not to wait till the day of Pentecost to be baptized by the Holy Ghost? But the manifestation of this kingdom is appointed, is decreed, is predestinated, is determined, unalterably and irreversibly determined. “I” said the Son of God, “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” It is a part of my eternal decrees, a part of my irreversible council. I—the Son of God. I—of my own authority—of my own right “I appoint unto

you a kingdom.”

If then he has appointed a kingdom, the soul passing through temptation must wait until it is revealed; it must struggle on until it is endued with power from on high. It must wait on the Lord, sighing at his feet, crying unto him until he enables it to believe in his name, and say with an unwavering tongue, “My Lord and my God.”

To you then that know temptation, that are exercised with trials, that are following after Jesus as the hope of your never dying souls—to you, as well as to the apostles, our Lord speaks. “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, &c.” To you that are not getting into a secure path, into a doctrinal rest, into antinomian sloth and presumption; that are not seated upon some lofty mountain where there is neither dew nor rain; that are not burled in the world, nor overwhelmed with pride; but are lying in poverty of spirit at Christ's feet, seeking after the drops of his atoning blood; and determined with the apostle to “know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified,” to you the Lord speaks, “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” Now do I not, to those I speak who are distressed in conscience, do I not describe the longing desires of your souls, when I speak of an inward kingdom of grace as revealed and set up by the power of the Holy Ghost? You know that nothing but a revealed salvation will do for you. You have tried doctrines, and found that unless the Blessed Spirit sealed them upon your heart, they contained no power or savour. You have tried ordinances and though they are good in their place, you have found that in themselves they afforded no comfort. You have tried reading books and authors, and they have left you dark, and stupid, and dead. You have tried hearing ministers, and yet you often go away from preaching with a heart more cast down than when you entered the chapel. You have tried the good opinion of man, and found it to be a broken reed; you have tried your own heart, and found it treacherous; your own resolutions, and they have been over-

come; your own strength, and found it weakness; your own nature, and found it rotten to the core. And therefore, being stripped and made poor, and needy and naked, you are sighing after a manifested Jesus—after the sweet visitations of his love to your soul. And as you are engaged in your daily employment, as you are driving the bolt into the ship, or standing behind the counter, or holding the stilts of the plough, or you of the other sex, plying the needle, or engaged in some household work, there is a secret prayer going up from the heart unto the Lord. There in an inward sighing, panting, crying of your heart after him “as the hart panteth after the water brooks.” Then to you saith the Lord, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, to eat and drink at my table—to eat my flesh which is meat indeed, and drink my blood which is drink indeed.” “All things are yours, for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” O poor hungry soul, are you not longing for these spiritual delicacies? And you who have a spiritual appetite, are you not hungering after this heavenly banquet? Is not all insufficient but Jesus’ blood, and grace and glory? But mark this, when you come to sit upon thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; when you say ‘this man’s experience is defective, and, that man’s experience is rotten’; when you declare that this man is nothing but a presumptuous hypocrite, and that man is bolstered up with a name to live while dead; when you tell the children of God that they must sink lower in the depths of humiliation, before they can sit upon Christ’s throne, that they must have a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a tender conscience, before Jesus will reveal himself to their souls; when you judge the twelve tribes of Israel by putting the plummet into their hearts, expect to be hated and despised of all men for Jesus’ sake; expect to be harrassed by the devil, to be tempted by your own hearts, to be abhorred by the professing church.

But expect also to have the sweet enjoyments and heavenly consolations of Jesus, when he takes you away from men to converse with himself, and withdraws you from the noise of tongues, to reveal himself with glory and power in your soul.

29 HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY

Preached at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth, on Lord's Day Morning,

August 22, 1841

"The Lord hear Thee in the day of trouble; the Name of the God of Jacob defend Thee; send Thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen Thee out of Zion."

Psalms 20:1, 2

There can be no doubt that the Psalms testify much of Jesus. The Lord Himself, before He "opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures," said to His disciples, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." (Luke 24:44.) The Lord of life and glory, whilst hanging on the cross, cried aloud from Psalm 22—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Nay, we find the very circumstances, which attended His crucifixion described in that Psalm with great minuteness; such as, "They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." "They part My garments amongst them, and cast lots upon My vesture."

Now I believe that Psalm 20 refers mainly to the same subject, and that it is the prayer of the church offered up to God the Father on behalf of the Lord Jesus. The church foresaw, by the Spirit of prophecy, the sufferings of her Head; she looked forward to the agonies and distresses that the Lord Jesus was to undergo for her, and the benefits that were to arise out of them; and, foreseeing these things, in the Spirit of prophecy, she poured forth Psalm 20 as a prayer to the Father on His behalf. The Holy Ghost framed this prayer for her by way of anticipation; and thus, as the apostle speaks, "The Spirit of Christ which was in her testified before-

hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:11.) Viewed in this light, how earnest and how suitable are her petitions! “The Lord hear Thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend Thee; send Thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen Thee out of Zion.”

That this interpretation of the Psalm is not imaginary or forced, is evident from several expressions in it, which have a clear reference to Jesus. Thus, ver. 3 (Ps. 20:3) it says, “Remember all Thy offerings, and accept Thy burnt sacrifice;” where the church prays the Father to accept that sacrifice which Christ was offering upon the cross. So ver. 4: (Ps. 20:4) “Grant Thee according to Thine own heart, and fulfil all Thy counsel.” The “heart” of Christ was set upon the salvation of His church; and the “counsel” of Christ to be fulfilled was “the counsel of peace.” (Zech. 6:13.) Nay, so certain was the church of Christ’s success in His covenant undertakings, that she says, “We will rejoice in Thy salvation” (Ps. 20:5) even before He went forth in the travail of His soul for the salvation of His people. But as an additional confirmation that this Psalm testifies of Jesus, we find His very name mentioned (ver. 6) “Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed; He will hear Him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.” I need, perhaps, scarcely point out that the word “Christ” means “anointed,” and that therefore we might read, “Now know I that the Lord saveth His Christ.”

But I would by no means limit the interpretation of the Psalm to this one point. As the experience of Christ is the experience of the church, “He being tempted in all points like as we are,” He having travelled in the road which we have to walk in, the same words are applicable also to the experience of believers. Thus, though the verses primarily, I believe, and mainly apply to Christ’s experience, yet we may also apply them spiritually to the experience of every child of God who suffers with Christ. When, therefore, we have glanced a little at the primary meaning of the words, and shown how they refer to Christ Himself, we will then pass on to consider

the text with reference to the experience of the people of Christ.

There was, then, "a day of trouble" to come upon Jesus; in fact, His whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was one continued series of trouble. But He had certain seasons of more especial suffering; such as the garden scene, when He "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground;" and those six hours of agony, when He was nailed to the cross, and not merely endured the most dreadful anguish of body, but also the tremendous wrath of God in His soul. It was to this season of distress that the church looked forward when she said, "The Lord hear Thee in the day of trouble;" implying that in that solemn season of distress the Lord Jesus would cry unto the Father; as the apostle speaks, Heb. 5:7, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." In His conflict with the powers of darkness "the name of the God of Jacob defended" Him. In that trying hour "help was sent to Him from the sanctuary," and "strength was given Him out of Zion."

I could not pass over this primary meaning of the Psalm without thus briefly pointing it out; but having done so, I shall pass on to the secondary meaning, and consider the text as applicable to the experience of the children of God.

The reason why this Psalm, as well as others of a similar nature, bears this two-fold interpretation, springs from this, that the experience of Christ and of His church are similar in kind, though not in degree. "As He is, so are we in this world." "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." The Lord, therefore, when the sons of Zebedee asked Him that they might "sit, one on His right hand, and the other on His left hand, in His glory," said to them, "Can ye drink of the cup that

I drink of, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" They said, "We can." And what was His answer? "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised."

What this cup was, the Lord's own words declare, when, in the gloomy garden, "He prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." (Matt. 26:39.) This cup was the cup of suffering on account of imputed sin—the cup of God's wrath. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same." (Ps. 75:8.) "Stand up, O Jerusalem, which has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury." (Isai. 51:17.) This cup Jesus drank to the very dregs; and some drops of it are tasted by every one of His people. His baptism, too, was a baptism, a complete immersion into, suffering; and with this too are His faithful followers baptised. It is, then, from this union of Christ and His people in suffering that the Psalm derives its two-fold meaning.

1.—"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." Viewing then these words as applicable to the experience of the child of God, we find mention made of "a day of trouble." All who shall be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation will have more or less of a day of trouble. This day of trouble may come upon some at their first setting out; on others in the middle of their course; and on others just before the end, before the Lord sweetly visits their souls, and takes them to eternal rest. But "a day of trouble" must come, sooner or later, upon every child of God. This is that day spoken of in Jeremiah. (Jer. 30:7.) "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it! it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." This "day of trouble" is when sin is laid as a heavy burden upon a man's conscience; when guilt presses him down into the dust of death, when his iniquities stare him in the face, and seem more in number than the hairs of his head; when he fears he shall be cast for ever into the bottomless pit of hell, and have his portion with the hypocrites.

This "day of trouble" is not literally a day, a portion of time meted out by the rising or setting sun, a space of twenty-four hours. The hands of a clock, or the shadow of a dial, cannot regulate spiritual troubles. A day here means a season, be it long or short, be it a day, or a week, or a month, or a year. And as the season cannot be measured in length, so the trouble cannot be measured in depth. The only wise God deals out various measures of affliction to His people. All do not sink to the same depth, as all do not rise to the same height. All do not drink equally deep of the cup; yet all, each in their measure, pass through this day of trouble, wherein their fleshly religion is pulled to pieces, their self-righteousness marred, their pleasing prospects of propitiating the favour of God broken, their presumptuous hopes crushed, and they brought into the state of the leper, to cry, "Unclean, unclean." Until a man has passed through this day of trouble, until he has experienced more or less of these exercises of soul, and known guilt and condemnation in his conscience, until he has struggled in this narrow pass, and had his rags of creature righteousness torn away from him, he can know nothing experimentally of the efficacy of Jesus' atoning blood, nor feel the power of Christ's resurrection.

Now in this day of trouble the living soul will groan, being burdened. The blessed Spirit who has convinced him of sin, is in him as a Spirit of grace and supplications, and enables him to sigh, and cry, and pray to the Lord out of the depths of a troubled conscience. And here we see a marked distinction between the convictions in the reprobate that end in despair, and the convictions in the child of God, that terminate in blessed deliverance. Whenever convictions fall upon the natural conscience of a vessel of wrath, there is in him no crying and sighing unto God for mercy. He may indeed "howl upon his bed," but he does not "cry unto God with his heart" (Hos. 7:14.) he has not received the Spirit of grace and of supplications so as to draw near the throne of grace, nor has he any of those feeble glimpses of hope, which encourage

the quickened elect to cry still more after mercy. But with him all is one black, lowering cloud of despair, through which no beam of hope breaks, one scene of unmitigated anguish, such as we read of concerning Judas, who went out and hanged himself, without one cry for mercy and pardon.

But the elect, who pass through this “day of trouble,” wherein their fleshly religion is broken to pieces, their towering presumption brought down and their fleshly hopes scattered, are not left to sullenness or despair. A spirit of prayer is given them; they are “led with supplications” Jer 31:9 they “seek Him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning” (Amos 5:8) and “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for them with groanings—which cannot be uttered.” They are thus enabled to pour out their souls before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15) and speak to Him out of the abundance of their complaint and grief. Thus the children of Israel sighed by reason of bondage in Egypt (Ex. 2:23); thus Moses cried unto the Lord at the Red Sea; and thus Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, in the presence-chamber of Artaxerxes the king. (Neh. 2:4) Being thus enabled spiritually to pray and cry, their groanings, desires, and breathings enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. This is implied in the words, “the Lord hear thee.” But the Lord will not, cannot hear any prayer that is not of His own inspiring. He bows down His gracious ear to the utterance of His own breath in the soul. In the living soul, then, during the day of trouble, it is not sullen silence, it is not reckless despair, it is not one black scene of unmitigated horror; but, amidst its trouble, there bursts forth the “well of water springing up into everlasting life;” there is the going forth of an inward spirit of supplication in the soul, with fervent wrestlings, at the throne of mercy.

Now, have your souls known anything of this day of trouble? I do not ask whether it commenced with the first work of grace upon your soul, nor how long it lasted, nor how deep it went. These are circumstances, which vary according to God’s good pleasure. Paul had three days of trouble (Acts 9:9), the thief on the cross per-

haps not three hours, the jailer at Philippi perhaps not three minutes; and Zion, as soon as she travailed, brought forth children. But I must ask, Has your soul known anything at all of this day of trouble? Now, if you have never known a day of trouble, you have never known what it was to pray in the Spirit, nor to have your prayers heard; for “the Lord hears in the day of trouble.”

But what are the petitions that the soul puts up in the day of trouble? What are its chief wants and most urgent desires?

1. Its most pressing want, and its most importunate desire is for the pardon of sin; and this not merely viewed in the letter of God’s Word, not merely received as a doctrine of the Scriptures, but inwardly revealed as an experimental reality, as a felt substance, as a divine testimony sealed in the court of conscience by God Himself. A man may for a long time try to stave off this deep sense of his own ruin and misery; but, sooner or later, the Holy Ghost will “lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,” and make him feel in the depths of his conscience that unless pardon be spoken into his soul by the mouth of God Himself, unless peace be enjoyed through the blood of the Mediator, he must sink forever into the depths of endless woe. Then arises the cry for pardon, for the conscience to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, that it may be purged from guilt and condemnation, and from all dead works, to serve the living God.

2. Another urgent want and importunate cry of the soul in this “day of trouble” is after the manifestation of Christ’s righteousness. The holy law of God curses and condemns it. This strips off all the rags of creature righteousness. The blessed Spirit then enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see Christ’s righteousness in the Scriptures, shows the suitability and all-sufficiency of this glorious robe, and kindles fervent desires to receive it as a covering from the hands of God. The seeking soul thus becomes interested in that blessing—“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Nor can anything satisfy it but the manifestation of Christ’s righteousness

to justify it from the curse of the law and the guilt of sin, and clothe it with a robe in which it may stand accepted before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. If this be so, what must we say of those that fight against imputed righteousness—that with daring blasphemy call it “imputed nonsense?” Must we not say that all such testify to their own condemnation, and openly proclaim that they never knew a day of trouble, and never hungered and thirsted after righteousness? For if they had seen what they were in the sight of God, had their heart been opened up to them in its true colours, and their “secret sins been set in the light of God’s countenance,” they would have been so pricked in their conscience—they would so have seen their own righteousness as filthy rags, that under the blessed Spirit’s operations, they would have hungered and thirsted, panted and cried, after the manifestation of that glorious righteousness of Jesus “which is unto all, and upon all them that believe.”

3. Another urgent want and pressing desire of the soul in the “day of trouble” is for a special manifestation of Christ. I will tell you, friends, what brings a man to cry after these manifestations and revelations, which the world calls enthusiasm and fanaticism, and professors say is mere delusion—it is having wants, exercises, doubts, fears and troubles; it is being brought into that spot where nothing can deliver the soul from the lowest hell but the personal, individual, experimental, supernatural manifestations of the mercy and grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, till a man is brought more or less into “the day of trouble,” he will trifle with God, he will sport and play with truth; and the solemn verities of eternity will be to him little less than idle tales. But when he is arrested, tried and condemned by God’s holy law, and brought by the Spirit into those depths out of which he feels he cannot deliver himself, nor any human arm deliver him, then he is taught in the depths of his soul to sigh and sue after the manifestation and revelation of God’s mercy and grace in the face of Jesus Christ. And until he gets these sweet manifestations in his

conscience, he cannot taste the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

It is not, then, having passed through a day of natural trouble, which stamps us as Christians, for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7.) Nor is it altogether trouble about our souls that stamps us as Christians; for many have been troubled about their souls, and it has been but the natural convictions of the reprobate. Nor is it having sighs and cries (though these are, in a measure, an evidence of life) that stamps a man fully and decidedly as a Christian, for we must wait the issue before it can be fully decided whether it is "the great and exceeding bitter cry" of Esau, or the spiritual sigh of the prisoner of hope. But those things stamp a man as a Christian, which do so in his own conscience. Those things seal a man outwardly that seal him inwardly—that is, receiving out of Christ's fulness some testimony of mercy and grace, some smile from His blessed countenance, some intimation of His special love.

II.—"The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." The word "hear," in the preceding clause, implies that there was a petition put up; the word "defend," in the present, implies that there were enemies, for if there were no enemies, why need the church pray—"The name of the God of Jacob defend thee?" The connection, then, of the two clauses of the verse shows that in "this day of trouble" there are enemies that attack the soul.

1. Satan, for instance, is an enemy, as his very name signifies, that takes advantage of this day to drive the soul into despair. His keen eye perceives what is going on. He sees the troubled countenance, the tottering knees, the downcast look; his sharp ear hears the lamentations poured forth, and therefore he comes in with all his infernal enmity and malice in order to sink the sinking soul, to strike the dying dead.

2. Guilt, with his knotted club, as Bunyan describes him, is another enemy that falls hard upon the soul in this day of trouble. His blows fall always upon the tenderest parts, and sadly bruise

the conscience.

3. Persecutors and professors of every kind are enemies in the day of trouble. As Job speaks, "Those whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock"—"Now am I their song, yea, I am their byword; they mar my path, they set forward my calamity." (Job 30:1, 9, 13.) As the strong and fat cattle thrust with side and shoulder and push all the diseased with their horns (Ezek. 34:21), so when a poor soul is smitten with pining sickness, all the presumptuous professors in the country butt at him. "Now," say they, "he is made manifest. He is proved to be a hypocrite, as we always thought him."

4. But even some of the children of God may prove to be enemies to the soul passing through the day of trouble. Job found it so when he cried, "My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." Job 16:20 Nay, the Lord's own disciples seem to 'have doubted Him when they said, "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:21.)

From these and all other its outward and inward enemies, the soul needs defence. The church therefore prays, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." But why should she use the expression, "the name of the God of Jacob?" For this reason; the "name of God" implies all those perfections and attributes that God hath revealed concerning Himself. We are known, each of us personally, by a name; and when the name is mentioned, it recalls to our mind not only the person himself, but all those peculiar features of character by which each individual is known. Thus "the name of God" in Scripture signifies everything that God has revealed concerning Himself. In this it is that "the name of God" differs from God. The infinite Jehovah is incomprehensible to finite creatures; but he has graciously revealed certain parts of His character, which they can comprehend when spiritually revealed. Thus the Lord told Moses, "There shall no man see Me and live;" and therefore He adds, "Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face shall not be seen." When the Lord, then, had put him into the cleft of the rock,

we read that "He descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." (Ex. 34:5.) That is, all that might be known of His gracious and glorious character. So He says of the Angel (i.e. Jesus, the Messenger of the covenant), whom He would send before Moses to keep him in the way, "My name is in Him" (Ex. 23:21.) that is, all that may be known of Me, all My revealed attributes. When, therefore, the church prays for the travailing soul, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," she asks the God of Jacob to put forth those gracious attributes and perfections which He has revealed concerning Himself. All these are enlisted on behalf of the Church of God.

1. For instance, there is the mercy of God. The mercy of God is a part of the name of God, for His name is merciful. He so proclaimed it in the ears of Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." This mercy, then, the church supplicates as the defence of the soul in the day of trouble. To "defend" a person is to interpose in his behalf, to throw a shield before him; thus there must be some interposition of mercy, some stepping forward of this gracious attribute, some flowing forth of the compassion of the eternal God, some visible appearance (I mean visible to faith) of this name of the Lord as a strong tower, or as a shield and buckler.

Sin gives Satan his power. Then, if mercy pardons sin, it defends the soul from his assaults; and the proclamation of mercy in the conscience beats him effectually back.

Sin arms guilt with his knotted club. Then if "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13) it disarms this cruel enemy. But only manifested mercy can overcome manifested guilt; and therefore what the living soul wants is not merely to see mercy declared in the Word of God, but for this mercy to step forth out of the bosom of the Most High, and to flow into it through the atoning blood of Immanuel, that where sin hath abounded, there grace may much more abound.

2. Again, in the name of God is implied also the faithfulness of

God; for this is one of His revealed attributes. He is therefore called "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy" (Deut. 7:9) and the apostle says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called," etc. (1 Cor. 1:9.) It is declared of Him that "He cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) and He tells His Zion, "Yea, they may forget; yet will not I forget thee."

Now this faithfulness of God to His covenant, to His promises, to His oath, to everything which He has revealed on behalf of the poor and needy, stands forth to defend His children in the trying hour. Everything may fail, yet this faithfulness fails not. "Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David."

3. Love is another revealed attribute of God, and is therefore included in the name of God; for "God is love." But what so eager, so prompt to defend a beloved object as love! It is "strong as death," and triumphs over every foe. What more suitable, what more precious defence than a taste of this love! Therefore connected with the promise—"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (that sight which kindles love), we read, "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." (Isai. 33:16, 17.)

Time will not suffer me to enlarge upon the other revealed attributes of God which are contained "in the name of Jehovah;" but all are at different times needed to defend the timid, helpless soul. I have shown how this blessed name defends the soul from the assaults of Satan and guilt; but he needs a similar defence from his other enemies, such as the taunting professors of religion. This David felt when he said, "Let Thy mercies come unto me, O Lord; so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me" (Ps. 119:41, 42). Perhaps in times past, as "evil communications corrupt good manners," he has, through an intimacy with vain, confident professors, learnt some of their evil ways; he has perhaps talked too boastingly, has walked too much in the footsteps of those who are at ease in Zion; has stood upon an eminence where God has not placed him. Now, when he is compelled with shame to take the lowest room, when he is brought to be low in a low place, he con-

fesses with guilt and confusion of face how he has been led away, how he has been deluded, how he once thought himself safe, and now finds that that safety was nothing but carnal security.

When, then, he is brought down from unwavering confidence into doubts, fears, and suspicions lest the whole work should be unsound from the beginning, his eyes are opened to see where his former associates are; and as he freely speaks what he deeply feels, it calls forth their wrath and contempt. Their taunts and jeers wound him, as they wounded David when he said, "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." I must say for myself, that though for a short time I was connected with some of these vain, confident professors, I never could get into their security. I could not see where the fault lay, but there was a hardness about them, which always repelled me; and when I found the lives of some of the highest in faith were to the grossest degree immoral, the thread of our connection was soon broken. But it is not so with all; and when their taunts are painfully felt, it needs the name of the God of Jacob to defend the soul.

But why should it be the "name of the God of Jacob?" Because such is the name of a covenant God. We therefore read that "Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." It is only as a covenant Jehovah that the name of God can be known, or when known can defend the soul. Then, by "the God of Jacob" we are to understand the Three-One Jehovah in eternal covenant engagements; and by His "name" we are to understand all His revealed offices, attributes, and perfections, as engaged on behalf of the elect. This name of the Lord is a strong tower, and upon all the glory manifested in it shall be a defence.

III.—"Send thee help from the sanctuary." The church goes on with her prayer, supplicating help from Him from whom alone help comes. But whence is this help to spring? "From the sanctuary." That is the place whence the help must come. Not from the exertions of free-will; not from attempts to work out a righteous-

ness with which God may be well pleased; not from making one's self a Christian by taking up at random the opinions of others; not by plastering and white-washing ourselves over with "decided piety;" not by stealing an experience from others, and going about dressed up in borrowed plumes; not by resting upon doubts and fears, guilt and corruption, as evidences; not by pinning our eternal all-in-all upon the sleeve of some good man; not by creeping under the wing of a minister, and there getting warmth and shelter. All these delusions and devices of Satan and the flesh are swept away when God puts forth His hand upon a man's conscience. It must then be "help from the sanctuary."

But what is the sanctuary? It is not any building made with hands, though the tabernacle under the Levitical dispensation was called by that name, but only so as a standing type of the human nature of Jesus, "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb 8:2). Paul therefore calls the Levitical tabernacle, "a worldly sanctuary" (Heb. 9:1) as opposed to the heavenly sanctuary. I therefore understand by "the sanctuary" in the text, not the typical sanctuary below, but the antitypical sanctuary above, the immediate presence of Jehovah, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts; the eternal abode of light, life and glory; the throne of holiness, majesty and power; whence the eternal covenant, ordered in all things and sure, originated, and out of which everything that blesses, comforts, strengthens and satisfies the soul proceeds.

Now this is the place whence the child of God wants help. And if this help comes out of the sanctuary, it will be filled with the fragrance and odour of the sanctuary. Before the high priest, under the Levitical dispensation, entered into the most holy place on the great day of atonement, he was to take a censer full of burning coals from off the brazen altar, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil. He was then to put the incense upon the fire, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat. (Lev. 6:12, 13) This was typical of the intercession of Jesus, now in the sanctuary as the "High Priest over the house of

God." The incense of His mediatorial work fills and perfumes the court of heaven. But when the high priest came out of the sanctuary, did not his garments smell of the incense, which had filled the most holy place? Would he not come forth fragrant with the odour? And as the incense was only burnt before the mercy-seat, would not the fragrance which surrounded and came from him be a certain proof to the people that he had been within the veil? So it is with every blessing that comes out of the sanctuary, where Jesus now sits at the right hand of God. It comes down as a good gift and a perfect gift from the Father of lights, and perfumed with the incense of the sanctuary. Coming from heaven, it breathes forth the air of heaven, and conveys a measure of heaven into the soul.

Thus it carries with it His own stamp; it bears with it His own signature. And it is this heavenly fragrance, which distinguishes all fancied blessings from real blessings; all presumptuous confidence from living faith; all false religion from true religion; all the delusions of enthusiasm and wild dreams of insanity, from the witness of the Holy Ghost in the soul. There is no fragrance, no savour, no power, no sweetness, no heavenly dew in any counterfeit that comes from Satan, from men, or from ourselves. They may imitate the shape and colour of the flower, but they cannot give it fragrance. But wherever help comes out of the sanctuary, out of the fulness of the church's covenant Head, out of the presence of God and the Lamb, out of the courts of heaven, directly and immediately into the soul, it comes laden with heavenly fragrance and divine odour. It therefore carries with it a reality, a sweetness and a savour, which nothing but a testimony from God Himself can communicate. Now here is a test to try your faith by. If you have no doubts about your state, and stand, as you believe, secure in Christ, whence arose that confidence? Did it spring from, and is it continued by, "help from the sanctuary?" And did this help come in the way of some word, some promise, some smile, some manifestation, some sweet discovery out of the courts of heaven into your conscience? And when it did so come, did it come down

into your soul fragrant with holy odour? did it breathe a heavenly atmosphere? and, letting down a measure of Christ's presence into your heart, did it fill you with love to Him? You may well doubt whether you have received any testimony from God, unless it has wrought some of these effects in your soul. If it came down from heaven, it carried your soul up to heaven whence it came down. All true religion comes down from the Father of lights. Not one grain or atom of it did nature ever manufacture. Satan may counterfeit the operations of the blessed Spirit, and the imitation may be so near the original as to perplex, if not deceive, the most discerning; but Satan cannot communicate what he does not possess, and what he cordially hates—the heavenly savour, sweetness, power and holiness, that accompany the Spirit's testimonies. These must be breathed into the soul from the lips of God Himself, or we can never have one grain or atom of them.

“Send thee help from the sanctuary.” When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it wants help from the sanctuary. And nothing but help from the sanctuary can ever stand it in any stead. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it. Now why does the Lord send help from the sanctuary, but because the soul to whom help is sent stands interested in the Father's love, the Saviour's blood, and the Spirit's teachings—interested in the eternal covenant transactions of the Three-One Jehovah. Help is sent him from the sanctuary, because his name has been from all eternity registered in the Lamb's book of life, graven upon the palms of His hands, borne on His shoulder, and worn on His heart. He was in the sanctuary when his covenant Head stood up on his behalf, and in the Lord's book all His members were written when as yet there was none of them. He was then virtually in the sanctuary before all time, and he will be personally in the sanctuary after all time. But he must be “made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” As he is predestinated to inhabit that sanctuary, he must have a nature suited for its holy delights. Now it is receiving help from the sanctuary that fits him to inhabit it.

Communications of life and grace out of it make him a new creature, and produce spirituality and heavenly mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul draws his affections upward, weans him from earth, and makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below, "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10.)

IV.—"And strengthen thee out of Zion." What is Zion? It is "the city of the living God" (Heb. 12:22) "the heavenly Jerusalem." Zion is the place, which God hath eternally blessed; to which His eyes are from one end of the year to the other; and out of which He has promised every blessing that His loving heart can bestow. It is on this holy hill of Zion that He has set His King (Ps. 2:6); He hath chosen it, and said of it, "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13, 14). It is out of Zion, then, thus blessed, that the Lord strengthens His saints. Through ignorance and self-righteousness, the newly quickened soul will often be looking for help to Mount Sinai; but that mountain is a mountain of curses. It was "the mount that burned with fire, and where was blackness, and darkness and tempest" (Heb. 12:18). No dew of God's favour, nor "small rain" of His tender mercy ever fell there; nor can strength ever come from that fiery mount. The law is weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3), and therefore cannot minister strength to those that are under it. It says, "Do, and live;" but it cannot give power to perform, nor communicate life. Every spiritual blessing and strength, then, comes out of Zion, for "there the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." All the treasures of grace and glory are in Mount Zion, and out of Zion do they therefore come into believing souls. God has blessed the church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3) and out of His fulness do all His members receive, and grace for grace. (John 1:16) One of these spiritual blessings is strength; and therefore the church says, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isai. 45:24). Yea, the Lord Himself is the strength of His people, as David says, "The Lord is the strength of

my life" (Ps. 27:1) and "God is our refuge and strength" (Ps. 46:1).

But what does strength imply when spoken of as a communicated blessing? "The Lord strengthen thee out of Zion." Surely it implies weakness in the party strengthened. Just as mercy implies guilt, and can only suit the guilty, so strength implies weakness, and can only suit the weak. We therefore read of Jesus that He is "a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress." (Isa. 25:4.) "They that stumbled" (that is, through tottering knees) "are girt with strength" (1 Sam. 2:4) and again, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. 40:29.)

Now we gather from this that there are testimonies from God in the soul, short of a full deliverance into the light and liberty of the glorious gospel. For if we look at the prayer offered up here, we read of defence, of help, of strength, and it would indeed be hard to say that there was no help nor strength communicated short of full deliverance. These things admit of degrees from their very nature, and are proportionate to the necessity of the case. There is a being "holpen with a little help" (Dan. 11:34) and strength according to the day (Deut. 33:25). Now, however men high in the letter of truth, but destitute of the feeling power, may jeer at everything short of a full deliverance and a constant assurance, the exercised children of God prize any testimony that comes from Him. Any coin that bears the stamp of Heaven's mint, any testimony that carries with it an evidence that it came from the courts of heaven, will be highly prized by the living soul. For what such want is realities. If the Lord is pleased to give him but a small coin, if it comes from the courts above, and bears the image and superscription of dying love, it makes him rich indeed; it is an evidence of eternal bliss, a sure testimony that his name is in the book of life.

But proud professors, who feel nothing of the difficulties of the way, who are never tried nor harassed with temptations, and know nothing of what it is to pour out their souls before God, despise the small coin, and would rather have a forged piece of money, provid-

ed it were bulky and large, than have a smaller piece stamped in heaven's own mint, which they could not make so great a display of.

I have sometimes said that if a thief come into a man's house, and see a sovereign and a halfpenny lying upon the mantel-piece, he will take the sovereign in preference to the halfpenny. And so you will find in religious matters that a hypocrite in Zion will rarely choose a little experience. He will steal the best he can lay his hands on, and the more deeply dyed in hypocrisy, the more will he usually boast of his depths and heights. You will never find professors in dead assurance prizing small testimonies. There is no crying in their soul after a smile from the Lord, or a word from His gracious lips. Nor do such ever sigh after true humility, or tenderness of conscience, or brokenness of heart, or access unto God. Such things are too little and too low for them to prize. They cannot make a show with them before men, and that is all the religion they understand or care about; for they know nothing of being solemnly blessed in the depths of conscience.

Now I am well convinced that when the soul is passing through spiritual trouble, what it wants is something from God; but it never presumes to dictate to Him in what way the blessing shall come, nor how great it shall be. The living soul cannot go with daring presumption to the throne of grace to claim spiritual blessings; but its cry is that the Lord would bestow His favours in a way of mercy through the blood of the Mediator. And this it seeks and pleads for in a way of special manifestation, and that often in the smallest degree. Thus when pressed with guilt and shame, it seems brought often to this, that if God will give it but one word, it will for ever praise and bless His holy name; if He will bestow but one smile, it will ask no more; if He will but drop one sweet soft testimony, that will satisfy him of his adoption into the family of God.

"Ah! but," say our towering professors, "nothing but the full assurance of faith will ever do." Why, if the soul is in trouble and

distress, and wants relief, strength, and help from God, it does not dare to prescribe to God how much to give. Does the beggar, standing at my door in rags, reject the copper coin? If he does, it shows he is an impostor, and only fit for the tread-wheel. No, if he is really what he professes to be, he will thankfully take a penny. So the child of God who knows what it is to be a beggar, spiritually to feel soul poverty, will not dare, with the presumptuous professor, to claim mercy and grace; but will come as a poor needy insolvent and bankrupt, thankful to receive any crumbs that may fall from God's table, or any drops from that river "which maketh glad the city of God." If the widow's mite was acceptable to God, as showing the widow's heart, shall not any token from God, however small (though in reality no gift from Him can be so called), be acceptable to us as showing God's heart towards us?

The communication of strength is perhaps the least perceptible of God's gifts. We find it out often by the absence of it, as Samson "wist not that the Lord had departed from him," until the Philistines came upon him. Till the moment came for him to defend himself, he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." (Judges 16:19, 20.) And the Lord makes us sensibly, and often very painfully, feel that "without Him we can do nothing," before He leads us into that other and brighter mystery, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Let me run over the chief particulars that I have laid before you from the text, and see how truth and conscience can answer them throughout. Has the Lord then raised up in your hearts and mine some of the feelings that I have been attempting this morning to describe? And first, with respect to the day of trouble spoken of in the text, has this day passed upon you? I am not asking when it came, nor how it came. I am not going to inquire whether it came through some sermon heard, or passage of Scripture applied with power, or in a less marked manner. Such circumstances vary in nearly every case, and do not affect the reality and genuineness of the work. The most important point is, Has it come at all? Have

you ever passed under God's rod? "Yes," say you, "I have known a day of trouble. I have passed through a season of spiritual distress."

Let us go now a step further. Let us have things as plain as we can make them. What were your feelings under this day of trouble? Had you any earnest groans and sighs for deliverance? Was there poured out upon you a Spirit of grace and of supplications, whereby you were enabled to pour out your hearts unto God? It was so with Hannah (1 Sam. 1:15), with David (Ps. 18:6), with Hezekiah (Isa. 38:2, 3), with Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55), and even with the Lord Himself in the days of His flesh (Heb. 5:7). And here lies the great difference between the elect in trouble and the reprobate in trouble, that the former seek the Lord, but the latter do not; as Elihu speaks (Job 36:13), "The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when He bindeth them." Was this the experience of your soul in the day of trouble?

Again, when in the day of trouble, what did you petition the Lord for? Could anything satisfy you short of a testimony of His mercy? The conscience, when there is divine life in the soul, cannot be quieted with the mere act of prayer? It has no real peace until it is purged by the blood of sprinkling; and if the burden go off without it, it will return again and again until atoning blood speaks pardon. And we do well to remember that this help comes from the sanctuary, and this strength out of Zion. Many people's religion seems to be of this kind. They have passed through convictions, and from those convictions have received some deliverance, not, however, out of Zion, but out of Sinai. A few resolutions to mend their lives—if churchmen an attendance at the Sacrament, if Dissenters a getting themselves baptized and joining the church—some such reformation heals all the wounds of conscience. But this is obtaining a deliverance from Sinai, not from Zion. Nay, a person may have gospel language in his lips, and yet cleave to the law of works in his heart. He may profess to believe all the doctrines of grace, and never have felt the power of any one of them, may be sound in the letter of gospel truth, and never have been divorced

from the first husband. Legality and self-righteousness are not confined to Arminians and Pharisees. They often come abroad in gospel attire, and reign and rule unsuspected where most loudly disclaimed.

To some here it may be now a day of trouble—I mean spiritual trouble; and as you are passing through it, many sighs and cries are going up out of your heart. “The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” And may we not turn the prayer into a promise, and say to every mourner here present, “He will surely send thee help from the sanctuary, and will strengthen thee out of Zion.”

30 LIFE GIVEN FOR A PREY

Preached on Lord’s Day Evening, at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth.

August 22nd, 1841

“And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not, for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest”

Jeremiah 45:5

These words were spoken by Jeremiah the prophet to Baruch the son of Neriah; and they were addressed to him under particular circumstances. It was at the time when the Lord was accomplishing His purpose of carrying His people Judah into captivity; when, according to His righteous judgments, the Levitical sacrifices were for a time to cease, the temple to be destroyed, and the people to be uprooted from their own city and country, and taken into the land of Babylon. These were times, doubtless, of great temporal affliction. The presence of the invading army must have carried with it all those desolations which that terrible scourge of God invariably brings; and the righteous as well as the wicked must have alike suffered in this general calamity. Sword, pestilence, and famine came

alike upon all, upon him that swore, as upon him that feared an oath. (Eccl. 9:2.)

But in the case of "the remnant according to the election of grace," there were superadded to the weight of their temporal calamities the heavy burdens of spiritual affliction. The severe judgments of God upon the land were so many visible testimonies of His displeasure. And it seems as if the experience of God's people in that day was of a character similar to the general gloom. The dark lowering cloud that hung over Jerusalem cast its shadow over the souls of the living family.

We thus see a connection between Jeremiah's experience in the Lamentations and the temporal afflictions of Judah; and the same cause may account for the lamentation that Baruch poured out in the words preceding the text, and of which the Lord takes this special notice: "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch: Thou didst say, Woe is me now, for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest."

"Grief added to sorrow"—spiritual trials added to temporal trials, soul affliction following upon natural affliction, wave calling to wave, and burden heaped upon burden; and both together so depressing his spirits, so weighing him down, that he "fainted in his sighing, and could find no rest."

The Lord doubtless saw in Baruch's heart that which Baruch did not see himself; he saw lurking there a secret craving after things which God has never promised to bestow upon His people. He discerned through the thick veil spread over his heart that there were immoderate desires working in his bosom, and that he was aiming at things quite inconsistent with the purposes of God, the character of the times, and what was really profitable for his own soul. Viewing, then, with His heart-searching eye what was thus secretly going on in "the chambers of imagery," the Lord addressed Himself to the very circumstances of the case: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for, behold, I will

bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

There seems to have been in Baruch's mind a secret hope that the Lord would not bring down upon Judah the judgments denounced; at any rate, he appears to have cherished a lurking expectation that he himself would not be involved in them. Amidst all his grief and sorrow, his fainting and sighing, ambition, was not dead within; and there was a restless aiming at things inconsistent with the afflictions to fall upon his country, and with his own character as a prophet of the Lord. Now who of us can plead, "Not guilty!" to a similar charge?

In considering, then, these words, I shall take them, as applicable to a child of God, and as describing some of the inward workings of his heart; and I shall endeavour at the same time, with God's blessing, to trace out the Lord's method of dealing with His family as intimated in the text.

I. The evil, then, that lurked in Baruch's carnal mind lurks in ours. His heart resembled yours and mine, as being made from the same material, and derived from the same corrupt source.

1. Thus, led aside by the powerful workings of this corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things temporally. Riches, worldly comforts, respectability, to be honoured, admired, and esteemed by men, are the objects most passionately sought after by the world; and so far as the children of God are under the influence of a worldly principle, do they secretly desire similar things.

Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life. All are more or less deeply infected with it, till delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after "great things," and a secret plotting in his mind how he may obtain them. But the Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. He therefore nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their flattering prospects, and makes them, for the most part, even in this world, poor, needy, and despised.

It may seem strange, but I know from experience it is true, that even those who profess truth, and are fully aware that such a profession draws down upon them hatred and contempt, yet feel at times the workings of a secret ambition to be esteemed even by those whom in their right mind, they know to be enemies of God and truth. But the Lord will never let His dear people be esteemed and admired by a world dead in sin, or dead in profession. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My names sake." And however consistently and uprightly he may act, however he may be enabled in all things to walk agreeably to the precepts of the gospel, yet everyone that contends for the power of vital godliness, and manifests that he has the mind of Christ, will find himself hated, despised, and slandered, not only by the ungodly world, but by those who stand high in a profession of religion, while they inwardly deny the power thereof.

The express testimony of God Himself is that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12.) From persecution, therefore, none of Christs true followers can be exempt. And even with respect to what are termed "prospects in life," in the case of God's children they are almost invariably broken to pieces. Whatever schemes or projects the Lord's people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, He rarely suffers their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead—that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree. The more that worldly goods increase the more the heart is fixed upon them, and the more the affections are set upon idols, the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord. He will not suffer His people to have their portion here below. He has in store for them a better city, that is a heavenly, and therefore will not suffer them to build and plant below the skies. I have often said that the same axe which laid the first blow to me spiritually, cut up all my earthly prospects naturally; and though the Lord has beyond my expectation taken care of me in providence, yet it has been in a way quite contrary

to my former prospects and natural expectations.

2. But again: there is a seeking after great things in religion as well as in providence; and God's people, especially in early days, are often led astray by seeking great things religiously. I use the expression religiously in opposition to spiritually; for there is a great deal of religion current in which there is no spirituality. There are, for instance, gifts, which by no means prove the existence of grace in their possessor; and as these gifts often draw forth admiration, they are very pleasing to the carnal mind.

Many of God's people are seeking great things for themselves in this way, and are mortified and disappointed when they are withheld. Thus some private Christians are very anxious for a gift in prayer, others for a good memory, others for a talent in conversation or writing. They are galled and mortified because in these things others outshine them. So ministers are often desirous of a greater gift in preaching, a readier utterance, a more abundant variety, a more striking delivery than they possess. And this, be it remarked, both in minister and people, not for the glory of God, but for the glory of the creature; not that praise may be given to the Author and Finisher of faith, but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified; that they may be admired of men.

These gifts being for the edification of the Church, they are granted, comparatively speaking, to but few; and when God imparts them to His children, He usually takes good care that they shall not glory in them. If a minister has a gift for preaching, God sometimes so stops his mouth, so shuts him up in barrenness and darkness, brings such a veil over his eyes, and so hides the power and savour of truth from his soul, that he is obliged feelingly to confess that "he gropes for the wall like the blind, and gropes as if he had no eyes" (Isa. 59:10.)

If he is a private Christian, and has a gift in prayer, and is elated by it, the Lord will sometimes so shut him up before the people, and put such a temporary extinguisher upon his gift as shall abundantly convince him that even if he has a gift, the exercise of it is

not at his own command, and that thoughts, feelings, and words must be communicated to him from time to time by the Father of lights. Or if the Lord does not often thus shut his mouth, yet he shall have such powerful temptations, such desponding feelings, shall be so assailed with the fiery darts of Satan, and sink so low in doubts and fears, shall find so little access to the Lord in private, and enjoy so little secret communion with Him, that his very gift shall be one of his greatest trials, and he shall perhaps often view himself as a wretched hypocrite, who will be one day be manifested as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. If he be a minister, he will have to bury his head in the pulpit cushion, after he has finished his sermon, with shame and confusion of face, as I have often done, and beg pardon of the Lord for the base hypocrisy and presumption, that in spite of himself have so awfully mingled themselves with all that he has uttered in God's name.

3. Others again of God's people are desirous of a great knowledge of gospel mysteries; and the seeking after great things in this way is, perhaps, a temptation most powerfully felt in our early days. We are often then aspiring after a great knowledge of truth in the letter, instead of thirsting after the savour, power, and unction of truth in the soul. And thus by reading many books, hearing various ministers, and going into the company of the children of God, we often heap up imaginary riches, not knowing that the wind of the Lord is coming to blow upon them, and to make these fancied treasures like "the chaff of the summer threshing floors."

4. Others of God's ambitious ones are seeking to stand always in an unwavering assurance faith. They read in the Scriptures of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" they see it written, that "the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace," and they hear the apostolic precept, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." But not having been humbled, nor brought low, not having been taught the depths of their fallen nature, and the fountains of the great deep not having been spiritually broken up in their heart, they receive these passages into their judgment

without the unctuous experience of them, or their being divinely applied to their soul.

The sons of Kohath might bear the ark (Num. 3:31); but that was no reason why Uzzah should touch it. What was faith in them was presumption in him. Thus many touch with the hand of presumption what they see in the Scriptures, as Uzzah saw and touched the ark, without a divine warrant, and because joy and peace are spoken of in the Word of God, they lay claim to them without their being shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, as heavenly cordials for a fainting spirit.

5. Others again of God's people, without contending for unceasing joy, consider that it is a believers privilege to walk always in the liberty of the gospel. The liberty of the gospel is a most blessed thing, but like all other spiritual blessings it must be first brought into the conscience, and then maintained there, by the power of God the Holy Ghost. All other liberty is licentiousness. The liberty of the gospel is often prated about by those who never knew the bondage of the law; and were they asked whence they derived their liberty, all they could do would be to point out some text of scripture, such as, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1.) And what seems more surprising still, I believe there are among God's quickened family those who, with little else but bondage in their own soul, are contending doctrinally for the liberty of the gospel, and would be very angry if they were told they were not in the enjoyment of it.

Such are some of the great things, religiously, that pride and ambition often lead the people of God to seek. Baruch, perhaps, was fired with ambition to possess Jeremiahs gifts, though, perhaps little reckoning to have with them Jeremiahs trials. The Lord then speaks to him, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" as if He had said to him, "Baruch, these things which thou callest great are not worth thy seeking; I see the deceitfulness of thy heart, and the ambition of thy carnal mind; thou art seeking great things; seek them not!" This was the counsel that God gave

to Baruch; and this is the counsel that He now gives to His living family: "Seek ye great things? seek them not."

But some may say, "If we are not to seek great things, what are we to seek? Are we not commanded to covet earnestly the best gifts?" The great things that Baruch was seeking were little things in the sight of God; as those things which are great in the eyes of God are little in the eyes of professors. God and man have very different ideas on this subject, for "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways."

Does the Lord say, "Seek not great things?" What then? "Seek real things." Mark the difference. Great things may suit the carnal mind, but real things will alone suit the spiritual mind. "O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed!" cried one whose inmost soul was panting for realities; and with his prayer do I, in my right mind, join heart and soul. Realities are what my soul, when the Lord is pleased to bedew me with His Spirit, is breathing after; not great things, but real things. By real things I mean those spiritual blessings that are dropped into the soul by the mouth of God—the solemn verities of the kingdom of God made known by the Holy Ghost—such as the smiles of God's countenance, the testimonies of His mercy, atoning blood sprinkled upon the conscience, Christ's righteousness imputed and revealed to the soul, visits from Jesus, soft whispers of His love, blessed intimations of His favour, communion with Him, a broken heart, a tender conscience, a contrite spirit, godly fear in exercise.

Now these are real things. They are not what dead professors desire. Such never want power, unction, savour, dew, to be felt in their souls. There is in them no sighing after the smiles of God's countenance, or the manifestations of His covenant love. The great bulk of what is called "the religious world" despise these things; they are not in their book, their Sunday school does not teach them; the gown and bands of their pulpits does not preach them. They would rather hunt after that will-o'-the-wisp called "decided piety," or self-righteousness new christened "holiness,"

or missionary zeal, or tract dispersing.

Having no faith to realize unseen things, they want something visible to sense, something intelligible to reason, something tangible, something within the grasp of the natural mind. But to be poor and needy, tempted and tried, with no hope but that which God gives, no faith but that which God communicates, no love but that which God sheds abroad, no peace but what He speaks, no religion but what He breathes into the soul, is as much beyond their understanding as their desire. Nor until a man has come to the end of all the religion of the creature, and been divinely initiated into the spiritual knowledge of the only true God, has he any understanding of, or appetite for, those real things in which the very sum and substance of vital godliness, the very marrow and essence of true religion consists.

There is a desire in many to be religious, but they utterly mistake what true religion is. To live a good life, to abstain from sin, “to cultivate,” as it is called, grace, to be holy, to do good to their fellow-creatures, to exert themselves for the conversion of others—in these and similar things do most consider religion to consist. But a man may do, and be all this in the flesh, “which profiteth nothing” (John 6:63) and thus come short of eternal life.

I solemnly assure you that these things will never speak peace to your souls—I mean “the peace of God which passeth all understanding”—in a dying hour. These things have been possessed by hundreds who have perished in their sins. They were, perhaps, highly esteemed professors in their day; were pointed out as examples to others, died in a false peace, and in funeral sermons were sent triumphantly to heaven; when, could their souls miserable flight have been followed, they would have been seen to sink into the lowest hell. These things, if God has touched your conscience with His finger, you know from experience are delusive and vain; and, therefore, what your soul is panting after in those secret moments when God’s eye is looking into your heart, is to feel the savour, the power, the unction of heavenly things, and to

have the blessed visitations of God's love, and the manifestations of His grace and mercy.

II. But the Lord graciously condescends to give Baruch a reason why he was not to seek great things. "For behold," He says, "I will bring evil upon all flesh; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

1. The "evil" which God threatens in the text, "to bring upon all flesh," is not moral evil. Some ungodly men have preached the awful doctrine that "God is the author of sin." Far from my soul be that horrid blasphemy! God is not the author of sin; that holy, pure, and spotless Being could not, cannot, create that which is evil. Far, far from my soul be such a horrid thought!

There is, indeed, a passage in Scripture in which God is said to "create evil" (Isai. 45:7) and another, in which we read, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6.) But in neither of these passages is moral evil, that is, sin, intended, but "calamity, trouble," as the context shows, and as the word in the original sometimes signifies, as (Gen. 19:19), "Lest some evil"—that is, calamity—"take me, and I die." "I make peace, and create evil." The one is the opposite of the other; but moral evil is not the opposite to "peace." "Trouble, distress, war," are the opposites of "peace;" but "moral evil" is the opposite of "good." So "the evil in a city, which the Lord doeth" Am 3:6 is not sin; but God asks a question, whether such calamities as war, pestilence, or famine can take place without His bringing them upon it.

The evil spoken of in the text is of the same kind, and means trouble, distress, calamity. This evil the Lord brought literally upon all flesh, when He brought the armies of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, when He gave up the holy city into the hands of the Chaldees, suffered the temple to be destroyed by profane hands, and the people to be carried into captivity. This "bringing of evil upon all flesh" (that is, in this restricted sense, "upon all the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem") was indeed battering down all Baruch's carnal ambition. Seventy years captivity and desolation

would effectually mar all his fond hopes of worldly advancement.

But viewing Baruch as a spiritual man, we may extend the meaning of the words, and take them in a spiritual acceptation as referring to God's work upon a man's heart. In this sense the Lord may be said to bring evil upon all flesh, as far as His saints are concerned; not, however, by introducing sin into their mind, or by infusing moral evil into their heart, but by bringing those troubles upon them which to the eye of the flesh appear evils, and yet often are productive of the greatest good.

For instance, a child of God may be secretly aiming at great things—such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually disappoint these plans, defeat these projects, wither these gourds, and blight these prospects. But in doing this, He brings no moral evil upon His afflicted child. He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

He has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. If great things naturally have been sought after, the blow falls there; if great things religiously, the blow is usually made in that direction. Thus when the Lord brings cutting convictions into the conscience; when He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) in religion, sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces in this day of visitation.

Some here perhaps, myself among the number, may have fallen into the snare of which Hart speaks when he says, "he hasted to make himself a Christian by mere doctrine;" and in the day of visitation, when the Lord searched Jerusalem with candles, found

how wretchedly we were deceived by seeking great things instead of real—aiming at gifts more than grace, and the glittering and the showy, rather than the solid and the substantial.

The Lord may be said spiritually to “bring evil upon all flesh,” when He lays trouble and calamity upon the flesh, and upon all that the flesh loves. The blow falls upon the fruits of the flesh, when it cuts down fleshly religion, and roots up false hopes, vain confidence, and self-dependence. The effect of these strokes is to lay the soul poor and needy at the footstool of mercy; and as the Holy Ghost enlightens the eyes to see, quickens the soul to feel, and raises up power to ask, there is now a seeking after real things—substance as opposed to shadows. Thus pardon, mercy, the testimony of God in the soul, the lifting up of the light of His countenance, the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon the conscience, with all the other spiritual blessings revealed in the gospel, are sought after, valued, and prized.

It is not enough now that they are heard from a minister, assented to in the judgment, or received on the testimony of others. They are only now so far enjoyed as they are tasted, felt, and handled in the depths of the heart. I believe I can say for myself, until evil came upon me in this way, chiefly through a long illness (though if I have life now, I had it before that visitation), yet until trouble came, and I was brought low in body and soul, I was never seeking as I have done since, the visitations and manifestations of the Lord’s favour. Deceived by Satan and my own heart, I was seeking rather to make myself wise in the letter, than to feel the power of vital godliness in my soul.

But ever since then, amidst many discouragements, and with many alterations and changes, I have felt led, as I never knew before, or at least not from the same pressing sense of need, to seek after the visitations and manifestations of the Lord’s favour—the dew of His Spirit, the application of His atoning blood, and the inward testimonies of His love and grace. Nor can I rest for salvation upon anything else. I am not, therefore, speaking at a per-

adventure. I know the ground, for I have travelled it; I have lined it with laborious footsteps; and therefore having tracked it out, I speak, in my measure, that which I know, and testify that which I feel.

When the Lord, then, thus brings evil upon our flesh, it is not to sweep away any real religion that we may possess. It is to sweep away our false religion. This winnowing fan is to fan away the chaff, and leave the pure grain. This keen knife of the heavenly Anatomist is only to cut away the diseased excrescences, and unhealthy tumours, and leave the sound parts uninjured. When the Lord brings distress into the soul, it is not to destroy any one grace that has been communicated by the blessed Spirit, but to fulfil that word, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." He puts "His vessels of gold and silver" (2 Tim. 2:20) into the furnace to take away their dross, that they may be "sanctified, and meet for the Masters use." For He has chosen His Zion in the furnace of affliction; and "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, that He may purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3.)

2. But we pass on to consider the promise of special preservation which the Lord gave Baruch in the midst of this calamity. "But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest." In its literal sense, it gave Baruch a promise of temporal preservation. In the midst of all the calamities that should befall Jerusalem, his life should be untouched.

But I believe the words contain a deeper sense, and admit of a spiritual and experimental interpretation.

There is a life given to the elect when the blessed Spirit quickens their souls—a life eternal, communicated to them out of the fulness of the Son of God. This life is a personal, individual life; and thus there seems to be a sweetness contained in the expression, "thy life." "Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey." This life which is treasured up in the fulness of Christ is breathed into the

soul in the appointed time by the Holy Ghost, is kept alive there by His Almighty power, and will burn brighter and brighter in the realms of endless day.

This life was given unto Baruch; and it is the sovereign gift of God to all His elect. It is not earned by free will, nor merited by creature righteousness; it is not nature transmuted into grace, nor youthful piety which by due and diligent cultivation, through some gradual and imperceptible process, has grown up into spirit. This divine and supernatural life cannot be infused into the blood from religious parents, cannot be obtained from the Sunday school, nor taught by tutors and governesses. The happy partakers of this divine life are not so “born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,” but directly and immediately “of God” (John 1:13.) And that because they were chosen in Christ before the world began, and are personally interested in His blood and righteousness.

3. But we may observe, from the expression made use of in the text, that this life which is given to the child of God, is given to him in a peculiar way. “Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey.” Are you not, my friends, continually finding that this life is given in God’s own channel of communication? If your experience resembles mine, you sit sometimes by your fireside, or you take your walk in the fields, sighing and panting after the manifestations of God’s loving-kindness and tender mercy. But I want it to come in my way, not God’s way. I want to have it poured, as it were, into my soul out of Christs fulness, without its passing through the channel of griefs, trials, sorrows and difficulties. But God does not give His favours in this way. He says, “Thy life will I give”—a free, irreversible gift, but to come in a certain way (I was going to say on a certain condition, but I hate the word “condition”)—“for a prey.”

Let us see if we can penetrate into the spiritual meaning of these words. The word “prey” points out that this life is an object of attack. We hear of “beasts of prey,” and of “birds of prey,” and

the expression implies a carnivorous animal. Thus the words, "Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey," imply that there are ravenous beasts that are continually seeking to devour this life—voracious enemies upon the watch, who are eager to prey upon this life which God the Holy Spirit has kindled in the soul. How accurately and how experimentally do these words describe the inward kingdom of God! Eternal life is given by God, and kept by Him when given; preserved by His power from being ever extinguished. And yet preserved by a perpetual miracle, like a burning lamp set afloat upon the waves of the sea; or, to use a figure that I have somewhere seen, like a lighted taper carried over a heath in the midst of a gale of wind.

But the figure employed in the text points to ravenous beasts that are continually seeking to prey upon that hidden life, which is the gift of God. I do not mean to say that they have any appetite for it, but it is the object of their attack. For instance, there is unbelief, that yawning monster, ever opening his jaws to devour, if it were possible, all living faith in the soul. Do you not often find this "beast of the field" Isa 56:9 coming forth out of his den to prey upon the faith of God in your heart?

And at other times, his fellow-ravener, infidelity, that other monster from the deep, that other voracious beast from the bottomless pit, will be spreading forth his talons to grasp, in our feelings, all that testifies to the Being, character, and presence of God in the conscience. Some here, perhaps, may never have been so tempted, may never have had these awful suggestions presented to their minds. But if not in this manner, you may have been assaulted with blasphemous and rebellious thoughts against God.

Or if these beasts of prey have not thus violently roared upon you, the more subtle and insidious inmates of the forest may have sought to make you their prey. Worldliness, pride, and covetousness may have made much havoc with your religion unseen. The base lusts and filthy appetites of our fallen nature may have desolated your soul, and left sad marks of their talons in your con-

science. Or if spared the attacks of these grosser beasts of prey, presumption may have seized you in his grasp; or you may have fallen out of his clutches, as is commonly the case, almost into the jaws of despair, and may just have escaped, "as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear" (Amos 3:12.)

We read, too, of Satan "as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour." Thus, what with the lion without, and the ravenous beasts within, wherever we go, we are beset with ferocious animals that are seeking to prey upon our souls.

Thus, "our life is given us for a prey;" and the power, faithfulness, and wisdom of God are manifested in keeping this life unhurt amidst all its enemies—all its enemies. As Daniel was preserved in the den of lions, and as the three men were preserved in the burning fiery furnace, so the life of God is preserved in the soul, in the midst of lions, as David says, "my soul is among lions" (Ps. 57:4) and amidst the fires, "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires" (Isai. 24:15.) So that the life of the child of God is one continual conflict between faith and unbelief, between enmity and love, between the grace of God and the rebellion of the carnal mind, between the sinkings of the drooping spirit and the liftings up of the light of God's countenance.

4. "In all places whither thou goest." This was true of Baruch literally. Whether he remained with the remnant who were left in the land, under Gedaliah, (2 Kin. 25:22) or was carried captive to Babylon, or was taken down into Egypt, as proved to be the case with him and his brother Jeremiah (Jer. 43:6, 7), his life was to be secure; but in such a manner as to seem to be in constant jeopardy. His life was given him, freely given, but not for him to play with. His life was secured him by the terms of the promise, as was more clearly expressed in nearly similar words to Ebed-melech, "I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee" (Jer. 39:18) but so given as to "stand in jeopardy every hour" (1 Cor. 15:30) and to be "in deaths

oft." Change of place and scene mattered not. These procured him neither release nor respite. Canaan, Babylon, Egypt, might present different enemies, but enemies were everywhere to be found.

So spiritually, in all places whither the living soul may come, in whatever state or stage of experience it may be, life is given unto it for a prey. Is the child of God sinking in doubts and fears, and well-nigh overwhelmed with despondency, fearing lest "of faith he make shipwreck," and go down into the billows of endless woe? His life is given him for a prey. Despair is now seeking to prey upon it; but "it shall not be given as a prey to its teeth" (Ps. 124:6).

Or has the Lord lifted up upon him the light of his countenance? Even then his life is still given him for a prey. Presumption may attack the soul that has been thus favoured, or pride make its insidious assault; thus, in either state, an enemy is at hand. If in doubt and fear, despair may open its mouth; if blessed with confidence, presumption or pride may "war against his soul." Thus, in whatever state or stage a spiritual man may be, whether a newborn babe, a child, a youth, a man in Christ, or a father or mother in Israel, his life is still given him for a prey; and, in every stage, he has just so much grace given as is needful for him, and only just so much.

Thus, the deeper a mans religion is, the more powerful are the enemies that attack him. The babe has little grace and few enemies; the man in Christ and strong in the Lord has enemies proportionate to his strength; the greater the grace, the more the trials; the stronger the faith, the heavier the burdens; therefore, be his state or stage what it may, "in all places whither he shall come," be it the barren sand or the green pastures, the land of great drought, or fountains of living waters—moments of sweet communion, or of guilt and self-condemnation—sorrow after an absent Lord, or enjoyment of a present Jesus; in whatever state or stage of Christian experience he may be, it is still true, "life is given him for a prey."

This then, my friends, is a short epitome of vital godliness. In my right mind, in standing up in this pulpit, or in any other where

the Lord's providence may call me, I have, in my right mind, but one object; not to make proselytes to my creed—not to draw together a congregation—not to work upon your natural feelings; but to contend for the power of vital godliness, so far as I am acquainted with it. So far as I am under divine teaching, my desire and aim is not to deceive souls by flattery—not to please any party—not to minister to any mans pride or any mans presumption; but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory, with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the edification of His people, to do the work of an evangelist, and "to commend myself to every mans conscience in the sight of God." And depend upon it, that a minister that stands up with any other motives in aiming at any other ends than the glory of God in the edification of His people, bears no scriptural marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself; nor will the Lord own his labours, or bless his testimony.

So far, then, as I have been taught the mysteries of vital godliness, this is the truth that I believe and preach—that spiritual life is the sovereign and free gift of God to His elect, a covenant blessing, given freely in the appointed season; and that this life is maintained by the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost, as an irrevocable gift, and to shine throughout an endless day. And yet though so freely, so irrevocably given, and so inviolably preserved, yet "given for a prey"—with difficulty preserved, so to speak, in the midst of enemies. It thus agrees with those words, "If the righteous scarcely be saved," not "scarcely" as implying any deficiency in the power of God to save, nor any risk of fatal or final miscarriage; but "scarcely" on account of the temptations, snares, hindrances, and obstacles with which he is beset.

If the Lord, then, has been our teacher, He has taught us something of these lessons; we have learned the sovereignty of the gift by seeing so many passed by, and us, the most undeserving, visited therewith; its freeness, by knowing our thorough ruin and helplessness; its preservation, by its being kept alive unto this day;

and the manner of its preservation, by feeling the fangs of so many cruel enemies, and, though cast down, not destroyed. And thus we may set to our seal, that though a rough and rugged, a strange and mysterious way, that yet it is a right way, and one that leads to “the city which hath foundations,” where there are “pleasures at God’s right hand for evermore.”

31 THE POOR SET IN SAFETY

Preached on Lord’s Day Evening, at Allington, near Devizes.

August 29th, 1841

“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him

” Psalm 12:5

The members of the quickened family of God have at all times and in all places closely resembled each other. The features indeed and complexion may somewhat differ in each; but the same family likeness is stamped upon them all. Just the same trials and exercises that the saints have to pass through now, they passed through in times of old; and just the same deliverances that they receive, or are longing to receive now, did they receive, or long to receive, in the ages that are past. It is this similarity of experience, as traced out in the Scriptures, that makes the Word of God to be so rich a breast of consolation to God’s poor and needy family.

“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.”

God’s Word deals with and is addressed to characters. The names of the elect are in the Lamb’s book of life above, but the characters of the elect are in the Scriptures of truth below; nor can anyone know his name to be “written in heaven” Lu 10:20 whose character is not traced out in the book that we have upon earth. With characters then, and not with names, have ministers to deal;

and their work is so to trace out the characters of the spiritually taught family as “to commend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” 2Co 4:2.

We have two such characters mentioned in the text; one called “poor”, and said to be oppressed, and another called “needy”, and said to sigh; and the Lord, on account of the oppression of the one, and on account of the sighing of the other, declares that He will arise to do that work for them and in them, which alone can deliver them, and set them in a place of security and safety.

I. The first character then spoken of in the text is “the poor.” We are not to suppose that this expression merely points out a few individuals out of God’s family—a few poor abject creatures marked out for spiritual adversity, whilst the rest escape free. No; it is a character stamped upon all the quickened children without a single exception. All the saints of God are not poor temporally, but they are all poor spiritually. The Lord implied this when He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Mt 5:3, clearly intimating thereby that the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and theirs only.

But what is it which makes a vessel of mercy thus spiritually poor, and brings into the soul a sense of its deep poverty, utter destitution, complete beggary, and thorough bankruptcy? It is the Lord opening the eyes of our spiritual understanding to see what true riches are. If a man’s eyes are not in a measure enlightened to see what heavenly riches and vital godliness are, what is the work of the Spirit, and what he himself must personally experience, before he can know Christ, here, and behold Him as He is hereafter; if it is not laid with weight and power on his conscience what he must taste, enjoy, and divinely realise of the kingdom of God in his soul, before he is manifestly an heir of glory, he will never be brought down into the depths of soul poverty.

So that the soul is brought to be spiritually poor by a kind of double process, first, by the taking away of all its fancied riches, and then by the opening up to it with power what true riches

are. A man is never spiritually poor until he is stripped of all his strength, all his wisdom, all his righteousness, all his hopes, pleas, and vain confidence, and has everything taken from him on which he can look with satisfaction, or rest upon with comfort. But until the Lord stretches forth His hand, and strips us Himself, we are never brought into the depths of soul poverty. We may fancy that we know a great deal about it; but till the Lord pulls us down from our lofty station, breaks our bank, and lays us in ruins before Him, we know nothing of what it is to be thoroughly poor.

Now the Lord has not chalked out for Himself any particular road by which He shall bring His people to this state. They shall all be brought there, that is most certain; every one of the elect shall be made spiritually poor; they shall all stand without a rag to cover them; they shall all feel themselves to be utterly destitute of any one good thing; they shall all be broken down into the depths of soul destitution, so as to feel that they have not a single grain of anything in them by nature that is pure, holy, or acceptable to God. But the Lord has not tracked out a certain path in which every one of the elect shall walk, without deviating from it one hair's breadth. He has prescribed to Himself no one particular mode whereby to bring to pass His own designs; but, in one way or the other, He will take care that all His redeemed family shall be brought into the depths of soul poverty.

Thus some He makes poor by stripping away every false hope; others, by bringing a terrible sentence into their consciences, so as to cut up their self-righteousness; others, by manifesting to them the awful pride, deceit, and hypocrisy of which they have been guilty; others, by holding up before their eyes a long profession of religion without the experience of vital godliness; others, by suffering them to go to the very edge of sin, in order to teach them what desperately wicked hearts they have; others, by allowing them for a time to walk in the base appetites of their fallen nature, that they may know what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God; and others, by leaving them to grapple with powerful temptations, that

by learning their weakness and helplessness against them, they may be effectually stripped of all their fancied strength, wisdom, and righteousness.

Spiritual poverty, then, is a miserable feeling of soul emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the nethermost hell. And intimately blended with the poignant feelings of guilt and condemnation, there is a spiritual consciousness that there is such a thing enjoyed by the elect as the Spirit of adoption, that there are such sweet realities as divine manifestations, that the blood of Jesus is sprinkled by the Holy Ghost upon the consciences of the redeemed to cleanse them from all guilt and filth. And thus by comparing its own wants with their helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for blessings, and having an inward light wherein the truth of God's Word is seen, and an inward life whereby it is felt, a soul wading in the depths of spiritual poverty, is brought to feel that it must be the manifestation of the light of God's countenance which can alone deliver; that it must be the testimony of God spoken by His own lips to the heart that alone can save; and that the want of this is the want of everything that can manifest it to be a vessel of mercy here, and fit it for, as well as carry it into, eternal glory and bliss hereafter.

To be poor, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God. Nor is it, perhaps, ever more deeply felt than in the lonely watches of the night, when no eye can see, nor ear hear, but the eye and ear of Jehovah; in these solemn moments of deep recollection, when the stillness and darkness around us are but the counterpart to the stillness and darkness of the soul, he that is spiritually poor often feels how empty he is of everything heavenly and divine—a sinking wretch without a grain of godliness—and without drawing too rigid a line of exclusion, we may unhesitatingly say that he who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings-forth of

heart as a needy naked wretch, he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God, has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

2. But there is something more to be known than poverty: we read of "the oppression of the poor". Now it is poverty which gives room for oppression. It is so literally and temporally. The rich are not oppressed. Those who have houses and lands, or any other property, are safe from the iron rod of oppression. Their money sets them above its reach. But it is the poor that are oppressed; and the deeper a man's natural poverty is, the more open is he to grinding oppression, and the more helpless and unprotected is he against it. Oppression is the exercise of strength against weakness, the triumph of power over helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for oppression.

And as it is literally and naturally, so it is spiritually and supernaturally. Soul poverty opens the door for soul oppression; and no man knows what it is to be spiritually oppressed until he is brought into spiritual poverty. As long as he has any fancied strength, he can resist oppression; as long as he has a stock of imaginary riches, he can keep it at a distance. He is like a rich man naturally, who can laugh at oppression; the length of his purse wards it off; its heavy hand comes not near him; the door has not been thrown open for the grinder to come in upon him. But let this rich man by some sudden reverse sink into the depths of poverty literally, and it opens the door of oppression immediately; and the bowing tradesman who courted him in the days of his prosperity, will be the first to press him down in the days of his adversity.

Thus it is also spiritually. Poverty opens the way for oppression. It was so with Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was laid on his bed of sickness, death stared him in the face, and he expected he should be cut off, and cast into perdition. This opened the door for oppression; says he, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." The cold damps of death stood upon his forehead, and despair pressed upon his soul. All his fleshly religion vanished in a moment; and he

had but just faith and strength enough to cry out under the gripe of the oppressor's hand at his throat, "Undertake for me" Isa 38:14.

A soul, then, does not know what it is to be burdened, oppressed, and weighed down, till it is brought into spiritual poverty. The law, for instance, laid on a man's conscience, does not sink him down till it first has made him poor; but when he is brought into the depths of soul poverty, so as not to have a single grain of religion, then, when there is the manifestation of God's wrath in his conscience, as Hart says, "it strikes the dying dead". It is putting a load on him who before was sinking; it is adding oppression to poverty.

So when a man feels that he has not in his heart anything that bears the stamp of vital godliness, then to have all his past backslidings laid as an additional load on his conscience, with all the slips and follies that he has been guilty of inwardly and outwardly; then to have them all brought up to recollection, and put as a ton-weight upon his sinking soul, it is like a hard-hearted creditor coming with a long bill and a demand of immediate payment upon a poor man who has just turned his pockets out, and not found a penny in them. Poverty and want are bad enough without the old score being brought to view; but oppression is added to poverty when the things that a man has said and done years ago—the sins of childhood, youth, and manhood, transgressions long ago buried in oblivion, are brought to light; and the foolish things, the hypocritical things, the presumptuous things, the daring deceitfulness, the base wantonness of which he has been guilty—are all laid as a heavy load on him who is ready to sink already.

Oppression, then, is a weight and a burden superadded to poverty. It is not the same thing as poverty, but it is an additional affliction to poverty. A man may be poor without being oppressed; but when he is poor and oppressed too, it makes the poverty ten-fold greater than before. Thus the Lord, in His dealings with His people in order to bring them down, first strips them and makes them poor; and when He has made them poor, and brought them

into the depths of soul destitution, then He causes burdens to lie on them as heavy loads, as though they would sink them into a never-ending hell. But here is the mark of life—the groaning, panting, sighing, and crying of the soul under the burden.

The dead in sin feel nothing; the hypocrites in Zion feel nothing, and those that are at ease in a fleshly religion feel nothing. They may have powerful temptations; they may have alarming fears of going to hell; but as to any heavings up of a quickened conscience under the weight of oppression, as to any pouring out of the heart before God, or any giving vent to the distresses of the soul in sighs and cries unto the Lord to have mercy, to speak peace, and bring in a sweet manifestation of pardon and love, and to keep at this day after day, and night after night, till the Lord appears—these are exercises unknown to the dead, and peculiar to the living family. A man may “cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit” Isa 65:14; but as the prophet speaks, “they do not cry unto God with their heart, when they howl upon their beds” Ho 7:14. But to breathe and pant after the Lord, to groan and sigh because of oppression, to wrestle with the Saviour and give Him no rest until He appears in the soul—this inward work is known only to the elect, and is out of the reach of all who have a name to live while they are dead.

It is the fruit of the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplications into their soul; it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, helping its infirmities, and making intercession in it with groanings which cannot be uttered.

II. “For the sighing of the needy.” There seems to be a distinction between the poor and the needy, for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost does not use vain repetitions. The expression “poor” has a negative meaning, that is, it implies an absence of money, a state of destitution; but the expression “needy” has a positive meaning, that is, it implies the presence of wants and cravings. A man may in some sense be poor without being needy; but he never can be needy without being poor. For instance, we see sometimes

in our villages a poor idiot, clothed in rags; but he knows it not; he has no idea of his state; he has no knowledge of a condition superior to his own, but is content with his poverty. Here, then, is a person who is poor, but not needy, because he wants nothing; he has no understanding, no intellect to enter into the numerous wants and cravings that are felt by his parents after better food, or clothing, or wages.

So a man may be poor religiously, and yet not be needy; that is to say, he may have his eyes opened to see what true religion is, and to know who are the people that have it; he may be convinced that this person is a man of God, and the other person is a child of God, and yet be sensible in his own soul that he himself has no vital religion. There are such persons, I believe, who are quite convinced that they have no vital religion; and yet have none of the cries and sighs, none of the wants, nor the groans, nor the fervent petitions after mercy, which are in a living soul. Nay, are not the quickened vessels of mercy themselves often in that state when they are poor, but not needy—when they are conscious of their barrenness and emptiness of all good, and yet have neither will nor power to lift up a desire, or put up a cry after a blessing?

1. The needy, then, is a character who is not merely poor, empty, and naked before God, but who is feelingly in want of spiritual blessings applied to his soul. Some persons can rest on temptations, and take temptations as evidences. Others can build on doubts and fears, and rest on doubts and fears as evidences. Others can take powerful past convictions, or present convictions, and lean on them as evidences. Others can look to a profession of religion, and take that as an evidence.

But a living soul must have heavenly blessings communicated immediately to his heart and conscience from the mouth of God. He must have deliverance manifested to his soul as a reality; he must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his conscience with divine power, to purge it from filth and dead works; he must have his eyes anointed with eye-salve to see Jesus; yea, his soul pants to

be led up into sweet communion with Jesus; he wants to be taken spiritually into fellowship with Christ, that he may see Him with the eyes of his soul, that he may look upon Him whom he has pierced, mourn over Him, and for Him, and with Him, and have some sweet, spiritual, and supernatural manifestation of His dying love to his soul. A nominal Christ will never do for a needy sinner, but it must be the Christ of God made spiritually known by the power of the Holy Ghost, sweetly revealed and coming into his heart with all His blessed efficacy, and shining into his soul like the sun in his strength, beaming forth blessed rays of grace and mercy. Nothing but this will ever satisfy a soul that has life in it.

The distinguishing mark, then, and character of this needy soul is to be full of needs. Day after day he wants divine realities to be revealed to his soul, to hear the sweet voice of mercy speaking into his heart, as from the lips of God Himself, that he is an accepted child, that he may bathe, as it were, in sweet manifestations of the love and mercy of God. In the supply of want he believes the marrow of all true religion and vital godliness to consist. So that he cannot take up with his present state of need for religion. If he is in doubts and fears, or is passing through heavy temptations, and is writing bitter things against himself, he cannot say, "This is religion;" but what he wants is something different from what he feels, even the blessed testimonies and manifestations that he is one of the Lord's own dear family: and I am very well assured from soul experience, that nothing but the application of heavenly blessings to the soul can ever satisfy the man who has had life implanted in his heart by the hand of God Himself.

2. We therefore read of this needy person that he sighs: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy." He is sighing after God; groaning in the depths of his soul after the lifting up of the light of God's countenance; sighing under the weight of unbelief, the burden of infidelity, the power of temptation, the wretchedness of his heart, the carnality of his mind, the barrenness of his frame, his stupidity, his brutality, filth, and corruption. He is

sighing to the Lord under the burden of these things lying as a load on his conscience, and begging the Lord that He would only lift up the light of His countenance, that He would only drop one sweet testimony, that He would speak but one word to his soul, to bring with it sweet deliverance, and lift him out into all the light, and life, and liberty, and peace of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

III. But what read we in answer to these cries? “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.” What is the meaning of this expression—“Now will I arise, saith the Lord?” It implies that the Lord had been sitting still all the time, looking on, and apparently taking no notice. It is if I may use without irreverence such a comparison like a parent sitting in the house, and looking through the window at his child, who is engaged about something in the street. He is watching the child with anxious eye, and observing all its movements, but appears as if he were taking no notice of it. But let the father perceive that child in danger; let him see it approaching the brink of a canal or a pond; still more, let him see it falling into it: the parent starts from his seat, rushes from the house, flies to the brink of the canal or the pond, and pulls his child out of the water. But he had been watching it all along, observing it through the window, though apparently taking no notice.

So the Lord says, “Now will I arise:” as though He had been sitting still, appearing to take no notice, leaving the poor soul to itself, suffering its enemies to grapple with it and beat it down into the dust, apparently indifferent, though watching it all the time, and only waiting for the proper season to interfere. “Now will I arise, saith the Lord.” As though the time were now come, the set season to favour Zion; as though the special moment were now arrived for the Lord to interfere; the special crisis when He must come forward to help.

Now, the Lord is watching this moment. He says, “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise,

saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." The moment is at last come, the blessed time to favour Zion, the predestinated, the eternally appointed season for the Lord to arise from His seat, to come forward to the help of His poor, needy child.

It is this sitting still of the Lord that so baffles, puzzles, perplexes, and troubles God's dear family, If directly they were poor and oppressed, if directly they were needy and sighed, the Lord would appear, it would not so baffle them, it would not so confound them: but it is this which so perplexes and puzzles the Lord's little ones, that He seems to take no notice of them, and that all their cries and sighs and groans and tears appear to have no more effect than if they were addressed to a dead wall; as though the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth never drank in their cries; as though He were as deaf to them as He is to the howlings of the reprobate, or to the blasphemies of the fallen spirits in hell. It is this hiding Himself behind a thick cloud, this sitting still and taking no notice, nor putting forth His hand to interfere, which so exercises and perplexes God's poor oppressed children.

But He will not be always so. "Now will I arise, saith the Lord." A time is fixed when He will "arise" for their help, when He will leave His seat, and come forward to stretch forth His hand, and lift them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and thus bring them into the light of His countenance, and into the sweet enjoyment of a full, free, and glorious salvation.

IV. "Now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." This opens up another part of the experience of God's dear children. We have thus far read of their being poor, and of their being oppressed in their poverty; we have found that they are needy too, and have heard their sighs under their necessity; and the Lord has promised to arise. But now there is another window thrown open to cast light into this dark room; another door is opened into this mysterious chamber of inward experience. We read of one "that puffeth at him." Thus we find that

the character in our text is not merely “poor” and “oppressed,” but also “puffed at.” Here an enemy, a personal antagonist is pointed out—“from him that puffeth at him.”

But this description applies to several characters—in fact to every character, be it a sinner, be it a saint, or be it the devil, that puffs at the poor child of God.

1. Satan then is one that puffs at the poor child of God, when he is passing through this oppression, and when he is sighing under this deep poverty. And what is contained in the idea of puffing? It implies a breath coming, a blast rushing forth. When the Holy Ghost teaches a vessel of mercy He teaches him by blessed inspiration. He breathes light, and life, and liberty, and peace into his soul. Thus it is also with this counterblast, this opposite work to that of the Holy Ghost. When the devil seeks to work on the carnal mind of a living child, he puffs into him what I may call “a black inspiration.” There is a divine inspiration from the Holy Ghost, breathing into the soul the light, life, and love of heaven; and there is a black inspiration from Satan, breathing into the carnal mind the darkness blasphemy, and enmity of hell.

The child of God, then, who is poor and oppressed, needy and sighing, is exposed to these puffs, these blasts from hell, which, as they roll forth into his carnal mind, spread themselves over it, and cover it with darkness and gloom. It is like a thick fog resting on the top of the chalk downs just by; or a dense cloud of smoke issuing forth from a furnace, that wraps up every object from view. Were we in the midst of that thick mist, or that dense smoke, we should see nothing out of it. So when Satan breathes his black inspiration into the carnal mind, this puff from the infernal regions fills it with that enmity, that malice, that blasphemy which Satan himself feels; and he puffs at the poor child of God in order to fill him with confusion Job 10:15, darken his evidences, becloud his prospects, and set on fire all the enmity of his fallen nature, that he may be agitated with a measure of that restless misery with which Satan’s own devilish nature is tossed continually.

Now the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." He shall not always be a poor, wretched, oppressed creature that the devil shall puff at, and fill his carnal mind with his own infernal wrath and enmity. "I will arise," saith the Lord, "and set him in safety." And how does He set him in safety but by bringing him into His own blessed presence? Satan cannot come in there; he is thrown back; he never can come beyond a certain spot. Wherever the presence of the Lord is manifested, it drives Satan back to hell whence he came; and thus the Lord sets His poor child "in safety from him that puffeth at him," by bringing him into His own presence, filling his soul with life and light and liberty, and thus beating back Satan into his infernal den.

2. But the word goes further than this. Sinners also puff at God's children, especially professing sinners; that is, sinners who are dead in a profession. These, who are always at ease in Zion, and are never troubled with inward condemnation or the devil's temptations, when they see a poor child of God in distress of mind, or destitute of that assurance and confidence which they believe themselves to be possessed of, are sure to puff at him. The word "puff" implies contempt. It was a custom among the Jews to puff at a person with their lips, as an expression of contempt, as if he were not worth a puff, or as if he were a breath, and no more. Thus we read Ps 10:5, "As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them," that is with contempt. So those who are dead in a profession will sometimes puff at God's people, as though they would say, "All your religion is only a puff of breath." And when they see a poor child of God in distress of soul, then, never having passed through the same experience, they puff at this poor exercised creature as though they would puff him away.

But the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." That is, "I will bring him into that blessed spot where all these contemptuous expressions shall fall on him with no more injury than a puff of wind on a man's face. I will set him in safety by giving him such a blessed assurance of his standing in

Christ, that all the puffs of his enemies shall not drive him from his hope.”

3. But again, saints can puff as well as sinners. O the vanity, the pride, the arrogance, the presumption, the hypocrisy, the self-esteem, which are to be found in God’s children! Such self-exaltation, and such puffing even against the real family of God! Those who are in bondage will puff at those in liberty, and those in liberty at those in bondage; the strong will blow their suspicions at the weak, and the weak will breathe their doubts against the strong; the deep-experienced will puff at the shallowness of the less deeply taught, and the shallow-experienced will puff at the inconsistencies of the deep-experienced. Pride and ignorance furnish on both sides ample materials for this contest of puffs. Nor can anything stop this windy battle but love and humility.

Now the Lord says, “I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.” It is a remarkable expression. The Lord does not say, “I will deliver him,” but “I will put him into a safe spot.” Now the very puffing of the saints of God against us, the Lord makes use of to put us into this safe spot. When those who are esteemed children of God puff at others of the living family, and it leads them to heart-searching, soul exercise, and crying to the Lord to make their hearts right before Him; when it brings them to the Lord in real trouble of mind, in true poverty of spirit, and stirs them up to supplicate His mercy and His grace, and that He would lift up the light of His countenance upon them; they are already set in safety. That is a very safe spot to be in—to be sighing and crying unto the Lord, that He would look down on them in mercy. Thus the Lord, when His poor children are puffed at, will often make this very puffing useful to them by causing them to pass through sharp exercises of soul, and in them to cry, “Search me, O Lord, and try me; and see if there be any wicked way in me.”

But the word carries with it another sense. There is the puff of flattery. A saint, like the man in the fable, can sometimes blow hot as well as cold; and there are those among the living family who

can puff up some brethren with the breath of applause, as well as puff at others with the blast of bitterness and contempt. Nay, they generally go together, for the same spirit that leads a man unduly to condemn some, will lead him unduly to exalt others. Now when one child of God gets his mouth to the ear of another, and begins to puff his flatteries into his mind, it does him ten times more harm than if he puffed his enmity at him. The margin, therefore, reads, from him "that would ensnare him;" and where is there a greater snare than flattery? I have been in both spots, and have had the puff of flattery and the puff of contempt, and can testify from personal experience that the one is far more dangerous than the other. The strongest puffs of bitterness and wrath and I have had a good share of them from saints, as well as sinners have done me less injury than the lightest breath of flattery and applause.

But whatever be the puff, the Lord can put us into a safe spot. "I will put him in safety from him that puffeth at him." And the safe spot that He puts him into is, to make these flatteries hateful to his soul; to give him such a sense of his own dreadful filth and folly, as to make him reject these flatteries with hatred, and to cry to the Lord for His sweet and blessed testimonies in his conscience. The Lord positively declares, "I will put him in safety from him that puffeth at him," whatever that puff may be.

But the place of safety is not always the spot where we think safety is. For instance, a mother might see her child walking on the roof of a house. O, if her maternal bosom could speak! If she had the power, she would fly to the top of the house and bring the child to the ground. The ground in that case, not the roof of the house, is the place of safety, and to reach it, the truant urchin must be brought down. But, on the other hand, if the child were down in a well, the same fond anxiety and maternal love which would prompt her to fly to the top of the roof, would prompt her to fly down the well and bring the child up in her arms. The ground is still the place of safety, but in this case the child must be brought up to it. Apply this spiritually. When one child of God puffs up an-

other with flattery, it is setting him to walk on the roof of a house. It is the spot of danger; and his heavenly Parent removes him to the place of safety, by bringing him down. Again, when a child of God is puffed at as being a hypocrite, and this breath of suspicion, mingling with his own doubts and fears, sinks him into despondency, the same kind, heavenly Parent lifts him up out of despair, by raising him up with a smile of His countenance.

Expect, friends, to be puffed at; to be puffed at by saints, to be puffed at by sinners, to be puffed at by the devil. Never expect to pass through life, no, not for a week, without being puffed at; some puff of enmity, some puff of contempt, or some puff of flattery. But the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." And when the Lord is pleased to indulge us with some testimony that our hearts are right before Him, and to favour us with some discovery of His goodness and mercy—He sets us most effectually in safety from him that puffeth at us.

We see, then, the path which the Lord has traced out for the living soul to walk in. But what a trying, mysterious path it is! What cutting work, for instance, is it to awake at midnight, and feel as if you had not a grain of godliness in your soul; to be oppressed, and have all your sins brought to mind, and laid as a heavy burden on your conscience! Who would walk in this path? I know I would not. What I should like is to sit quietly and prayerfully in my arm-chair, and for the Lord to pour His religion into my soul, just as I pour a tumbler of water down my throat. But the Lord says, "No; it shall come, but it shall come in My channel, not yours. Through much tribulation you shall enter the kingdom." And who would be needy, who would go groaning about the fields from day to day, or about the house, asking the Lord to apply the blood of atonement to his soul?—who wants to walk in that path? Would it not be sweeter, according to our apprehension, to go at once to the Bible, and to get it from the Bible? But to have to get it from the Lord with heart labour, with many groans and sighs, and then, after all our begging, to get scarcely a drop—why, what

a strange, mysterious path this is to walk in!

And to be puffed at!—to have the devil puffing his blasphemies into our carnal mind; to have those who are dead in a profession, whom we know to be in the broad way to hell, puffing their contempt at us; and to have even some of the children of God puffing at us too—who would choose to walk in this path? No man in his senses. But God makes His people out of their senses before they can walk in it; I mean to say, out of their senses, not literally, but so far as spiritual things are concerned. And then He arises for their help, and brings them into that blessed spot where alone they find real safety; the path of contrition and humility, the path of living communion with Christ, hid in the hollow of His hand from pride and presumption, from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the arrow that flieth at noonday.

“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.” Lord, fulfil Thy word. Thou hast said, “Now will I arise.” O that this may be the blessed season when Thou wilt arise and set us in safety from all that puff at us!

32 THE SENDING OUT OF LIGHT AND TRUTH

Preached on Lord’s Day Morning, at Allington, near Devizes
September 19th, 1841

“O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.”

Psalm 43:3

There is a very strong and striking resemblance between natural life and spiritual life—a resemblance so strong and striking that God has chosen the one to be a figure of the other. What spiritual life is we cannot, whilst in this tabernacle, really understand. We may know the feeling of it—and he that knows not the feeling of it is devoid of it—but to know what it really is, so as to enter into its true nature, is beyond our comprehension in this time state. Thus

we find the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes: "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all" (Ecc. 9:5). That the child does grow in the womb we know, but how it grows we know not. So that the blessed Spirit works in the heart we know, but how He works we are ignorant. And we find the Lord Himself declaring the same solemn truth, when He said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The way, then, in which the Spirit acts is a secret hidden from us. It may be revealed hereafter, or it may be of such a nature as will be eternally incomprehensible to finite intelligences. But though we know not the way in which the Spirit acts, His blessed effects are known to all who have the unspeakable mercy to experience them. For this one thing is certain, that wherever there has been the communication of spiritual life to the soul, there will be certain emotions, certain feelings, certain actings, which are the fruits and effects of the work of the Spirit in the heart; so that he who is destitute of these feelings, of these emotions and of these actings, manifests that he is destitute of the cause of them—namely, destitute of the Spirit of God as a Spirit of life and power in his soul.

The same thing is true of natural life as of spiritual life. We know not what natural life is. It is a mystery hidden from the human understanding. All that we see and understand is that there are certain results and fruits of natural life; and all that we know is, that where these effects are present, natural life is present, and where these effects are absent, natural life is absent. It is then only between these effects and fruits of natural and spiritual life that a comparison can take place, and such a comparison we find in the Scriptures of truth.

If we look, then, at the various acts of natural life, we shall see that they bear a resemblance to the acts of spiritual life. For in-

stance: one act of natural life is to breathe: so one act of supernatural life is to breathe spiritually. We find this set forth in Ezek. 37:9, where the prophet speaks to the wind and says, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live:" showing a resemblance between natural breath and spiritual breath. And there is a resemblance in this particular—that we breathe naturally an element which comes into us; something foreign to us, and yet something indispensable to our existence. So the spiritual breath of the soul consists in the life of God breathed into a vessel of mercy out of the fulness of Jesus Christ. The lungs have no air in themselves; air must come into them, in order that they may fulfil that office which they are appointed to fulfil: and so the creature has no spiritual breath in itself, but spiritual breath must come into the soul out of the fulness of the Son of God, that it may believe, hope, and love.

Again, another fruit and effect of natural life is to move and walk. Thus it is spiritually. As there is a movement of natural life, so is there a movement of spiritual life; and this movement of spiritual life is the acting of living faith in the soul, the going forth of fervent desires after God, the approaching His mercy-seat with access, the embracing His truth with affection, and the walking in the light of God's countenance and the life of God's favour.

Again, in the natural life there is, at times, the keen sensation of hunger. The absence of hunger shows the presence of disease. And thus in the spiritual life we have spiritual hunger; and the absence of spiritual hunger after the bread of God shows the presence of disease, that is, that the soul though alive is sickly. In the natural life there is also, at times, a thirst—one of the most painful sensations that the body can experience, and the gratification of which is indispensable to the continuance of life. So spiritually there is a thirsting after God, a thirsting after His manifested presence and after the testimonies of His covenant love, a thirst of such a nature that it must be gratified by some manifestation of the mercy and love of God, or the soul feels as if it must perish eternally.

But we find that though much of the presence and healthiness of life, naturally, consists in hungering and receiving food, and in thirsting and receiving drink, yet that these are not incessant nor perpetual. There are certain seasons for the natural body to be nourished by food and yet the nutriment which is received at these distinct seasons serves to keep up all the strength of the body. A man is not always eating naturally, neither is a man always eating spiritually. There are certain seasons in which natural food is given; and so, spiritually, there are certain seasons (and these often at long intervals—far longer than those for natural food) when spiritual food is communicated. And as, when the prophet had eaten twice of the cake baked on the coals, and had drunk twice of the cruse of water at his head (1 Kings 19:5-8), he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights; so, when the Lord has supplied His own blessed nutriment to the soul, it goes in the strength of that food as many days and as many nights as the Lord sees fit to appoint.

But what I chiefly aim at is this: to show how the children of God, in the absence of fresh manifestations, are still maintained alive by the food they have already received, and are inwardly strengthened by it to cry unto the Lord, and groan out their wants to Him, and seek supplies and communications out of Christ's fulness to their souls. If we look at the experience of God's saints, we shall find that the greater part of them are more in a hungering than in a banqueting state; more in a state of desire than in a state of satisfaction; and more seeking after the manifestations of God's mercy and love to their souls than feeding upon these manifestations as revealing in them the love and blood of the Lamb. And yet the life which vents itself in these hungerings and thirstings is maintained by communications of the Spirit, and is the secret fruit of former nutriment, which the blessed Spirit employs to strengthen them to seek and cry.

We find the Psalmist in this state of soul, whilst he was breathing forth his heart in the psalm from which the text is taken. He

was cast down with trouble. "Judge me, O God," he begins, "and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For Thou art the God of my strength." He was suffering under trouble of mind from the opposition which he had to encounter from ungodly and deceitful men. This, however, was but a small source of his trouble. There was a deeper and more poignant grief than that. "Why," he says, "dost Thou cast me off?" When the Lord supports the soul under persecution, opposition, and enmity, it is easily endurable; but when the Lord hides His face, when He does not vouchsafe His help, when, in addition to the soul being trodden under foot by the deceitful and unjust man, God Himself seems to cast it off as a vessel in which He has no pleasure, it is that which adds poignancy to the wound, it is that which rubs salt into the sore. Satan, too, seeing his opportunity, thrust sore at him that he might fall. "Why," says he, "go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" So that when David penned this psalm, he seems to have been labouring under a three-fold trial: persecuted and opposed by his enemies—cast off in his feelings by God—and oppressed by Satan. And as labouring under this three-fold trial, he pours his soul in this cry: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles."

I. David, when he poured forth these words, must have had three distinct lessons of divine teaching written upon his soul; and every one that feels the same desires that David felt, and is enabled to pour forth the same breathings that David poured forth, must first have had the same three lessons written by the Holy Spirit in his heart. The first was, a deep sense of his darkness, blindness, ignorance, and folly. If he had not felt this, he would not have cried to the Lord to "send out His light and His truth." The second lesson which the Holy Ghost had taught him, before he was enabled to pour forth these desires, was, to know the Source and Fountain whence light and truth were to come; for had he not known the source whence light and truth were to come, he never would

have gone to the Lord, and asked Him to send out His light and His truth into his soul. And the third lesson of the blessed Spirit's teaching in his heart was to kindle these desires, and enable him to pour them out into the bosom of God.

Now a man may feel darkness in his soul, and yet not know where to get light. And this is generally the case with a man under the first teachings of the Holy Ghost. But another shall have gone a step further, and have been taught by divine illumination the Source and Fountain of spiritual life, and yet not have the power in his soul to breathe out his petitions and desires into the bosom of God. And therefore the third thing is necessary, viz., to receive a Spirit of grace and supplications into our souls, whereby we are enabled to pour our heart unto God, and to breathe forth the desires of our soul into His bosom.

1. Having, then, these three distinct and yet blended feelings working in his soul, David gives them vent in this earnest cry, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." His soul wanted light. And what made him want light, but a deep inward feeling of his own blindness and darkness? O how a living soul often goes day-by-day mourning under a sense of darkness! How unable are we to realise any one branch of God's truth, when our soul is in this midnight state! How impossible it is for us to find our way to the mercy-seat, whilst we are thus groping for the wall like the blind, and groping as if we had no eyes! What a cloud of darkness, too, rests upon every part of God's Word, hiding every promise, spreading a thick mist over every invitation, and making the Scriptures to be to us as a sealed book!

Now when a soul is labouring and struggling under this Egyptian darkness, this midnight of the heart, it is often unable to breathe forth a cry for light, the mercy-seat being quite hidden from view. It is then where Job was of old, when he complained, "O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand where He doth work,

but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:3, 8, 9). But when these clouds a little break, and the blessed Spirit begins to operate in the soul as a Spirit of supplication, the quickened vessel of mercy breathes out these desires of his heart into the ear of God. "O send out Thy light." "Thy light;" none other will suffice. "Thy light;" none other can dispel the darkness. "Thy light;" none other can guide my feet into the way of peace. That, I believe, is the deep-rooted conviction of every living soul. He cannot walk in the light of the sparks of his own kindling; he cannot, in these dark seasons, walk in the light of past experience; he cannot walk in the light of other men's judgment; he cannot walk in the light of the doctrines of grace, as he has received them into his understanding; he cannot walk by the ignis fatuus, the will-o'-the-wisp that gleams from the bog of his own corruptions; nor by the meteor glare of some wild delusion. The light which he feels he must have, is light communicated, and breathed into his soul out of the fulness of Jesus Christ; and he has a deep-rooted conviction, amounting to a thorough certainty, that only so far as divine light, supernatural light, is breathed into his soul, and shed abroad in his heart out of the fulness of the Son of God, can he see a single step of the way, perceive any beauty or glory in Jesus, discern his own interest in the everlasting covenant, or move one foot forward in the narrow path that leads unto eternal life.

"O send out Thy light." He desired that light might be sent out. That is, that there might be a communication of it. The soul walking in darkness, and enabled under that darkness to pant and cry after light, is not satisfied with the conviction, however deep, that with God is light. The thirsty man is not satisfied with knowing that there is water in the well; nor the man who has lost his way in a mine, with knowing that there is light in the sun. One faint ray gleaming through a chink were worth to him a thousand suns, blazing, unseen by him, in the sky. And thus the benighted saint cannot rest in the bare knowledge that "God is light, and in Him

is no darkness at all," but his sigh and cry is that this light may be sent out of the fulness of the Godhead into his soul, so as to shed abroad an inward light in his heart whereby he may see the truth of God; whereby he may see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whereby he may see his name written in the book of life, and clearly discern his interest in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" whereby he may see Jesus, and in seeing Jesus see his own eternal union with Jesus, and in seeing his own eternal union with Jesus may enjoy sweet communion with Him, so as to feel His presence in his soul, and have His glory revealed and manifested to his heart.

2. But David wanted something more than light. He says,—”O send out Thy light and Thy truth.” The Word of God is pure truth, and the blessed Spirit enlightens the understanding of Christ’s people to know, and quickens their consciences to feel that “the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6). What wonderful things does God sometimes show us in His Word! How our eyes sometimes seem to be anointed with eye-salve “to behold wondrous things out of God’s law!” (Ps. 119:18). Sometimes in reading a chapter of God’s Word we see such beauty, such fulness, such sweetness, such glory in it, that it seems, as it were, to fill our very hearts. And what our souls want (I am sure my soul wants it, and it is my frequent cry to the Lord in secret that I may feel it) is to have this blessed truth taken out of the Word of God, and applied to and sealed upon our hearts by the Spirit of God. I want no new revelation. Day by day I seem more satisfied of this, and more established in it—that all saving truth is in the Word of God. I seek no visions, I desire no dreams, I want no airy speculations; but when my heart is brought to lie at the footstool of mercy, this seems to be the panting and breathing of my soul—to know experimentally and spiritually the blessed truths that my eyes see in the Word of God, to have them opened up to my understanding, brought into my heart, grafted into my soul, applied to my conscience, and revealed with such

supernatural and heavenly power that the truth as it is in Jesus may be in me a solemn and saving reality, that it may bring with it such a divine blessing as to fill me with grace, enlarge my heart into the enjoyment of the gospel, gird up my loins with spiritual strength, give and increase faith, communicate and encourage hope, shed abroad and draw forth love, and fill me with joy and peace in believing. I want truth to be my sword as well as my shield, my food to live by and my strength to die by, my spiritual nutriment here and my eternal enjoyment hereafter.

And I find this to be in me an increasing thing—I have never felt it more sensibly than for the last three months—to discard everything but the simple truth of God, only longing and crying unto the Lord to have His simple truth brought into my heart and sealed on my conscience by the Holy Ghost. Then I can join, and often have joined with the Psalmist in this prayer—if not in the very express words, in their spirit and meaning—“Send out Thy light and Thy truth,” that is, that truth which I see in Thy Scriptures, that truth which is saving, which is savoury, which is profitable, which is sweet, which is humbling, which melts the soul at the foot of the cross, and conforms it to the image of Jesus Christ.

3. But we want this truth “sent out.” That is, not merely to see certain truths in the Word of God, and be content with seeing them there; but to have these truths “sent out” of the Word of God, and brought into our soul with such divine power and heavenly sweetness as to be ratified, and as it were riveted there by the hand of God Himself. Our minds, friends (at least, mine is), are open to the vilest gusts of infidelity. I find these assaults from my own evil heart, or from the prince of darkness (for I cannot often tell from which of these two quarters they arise) continually lying hard at me; and sometimes these gusts of infidelity seem as though they would sweep away, not only all the truth of God out of my soul, but would sweep away the truth of God itself.

In such seasons, and when blown upon by such gusts, a man is brought to feel this—that truth in God’s Word is not sufficient.

He wants an inward evidence such as none but the Spirit of God can supply. He wants a divine authority persuading him with invincible power that the Bible is a revelation from God, an inspired declaration of the mind and will of God. And therefore he wants truth to be taken out of God's Word, and lodged in his soul. He finds that doctrines, however true they are, however good and Scriptural, as long as they are merely stored in his brain, afford no solid comfort, and bring into his soul no real satisfaction; but when they are lodged in his heart, and brought with divine efficacy into his conscience, they have a solid effect on him, bring into his mind stability, lift him up out of the things of time and sense, draw forth his spiritual affections, endear Christ, make His blood precious and His righteousness inestimably prized. But if the soul knew nothing of these conflicts, if it had not to pass through these exercises and temptations, it would be satisfied, readily satisfied, as thousands are, with merely seeing truth in the Word of God; but having these storms and tempests to go through, they blow away everything except the sealed and applied truth of God; and thus the soul that is exposed to these gusts is brought to sigh and cry unto the Lord that He Himself would rivet His own truth with His own divine power in the conscience.

But what was "the truth" which David sought to know, and realize its inward power by its being sent out of the fulness of the Godhead? Doubtless, the very same truth that saints are crying to be sent out now; and this can be nothing less than "the truth as it is in Jesus;" the truth of His blood as atoning for sin, the truth of His righteousness as justifying us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; the truth of personal and everlasting deliverance from all curse and condemnation, that truth whereby the soul is made free, according to those words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" the truth whereby the affections are separated from the things of time and sense, and fixed on the realities of eternity; in a word, to know Jesus Himself, by His own sweet revelation, for He is "the way, THE

TRUTH, and the life," and that He may be Himself enjoyed in our soul as the sum and substance of truth.

Every living soul, then, that is acquainted with its own darkness, its own unbelief, its own helplessness in spiritual things, and has been brought by a work of grace to sigh and cry after God, will, at times, as the Lord the Spirit works upon it, unite with the Psalmist and say, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth."

II. But David wanted this light and this truth to perform a specific purpose; to do a certain work; and therefore he adds, "Let them lead me." As a feeling of darkness made him desire the entrance of light; as a sense of his own treacherous, deceitful, and hypocritical heart made him want a communication of truth; so a conviction of his inability to direct himself a single step of the way made him cry out unto the Lord that He would send out this light and this truth to lead him. "Let them lead me." That is, let light be on one side and truth on the other: let them hold up my wavering footsteps, let them support my tottering limbs; or let light go before me to show me the way in which I am to walk; and let truth support me in the way that I may walk in the path upon which light is cast. A living man cannot, in his right mind, bear the idea of standing still—that is to say, standing still so as to have no spiritual work going on within; and still less can he bear the idea of going backward. He wants to go forward. He is often dissatisfied with his state; he feels how little he knows; he is well certified of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him: and therefore, labouring under the feeling of his own shortcomings for the past, his helplessness for the present, and his ignorance for the future, he wants to go forward wholly and solely in the strength of the Lord, to be led, guided, directed, kept, not by the wisdom and power of the creature, but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul. The mercy-seat is continually covered with clouds: God hideth Himself, and he cannot behold Him: the truth seems obscured so that he cannot realise it. He often cannot find his way

to Christ; he cannot perceive the path of life, nor whether his feet are in that path. He sees so few marks of grace in his soul, and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption; he finds so few things for him, and so many things against him, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind, and seems almost to come to a feeling in his heart that he is destitute of the grace of God altogether, that the secret of the Lord is not with him, but that he is a hypocrite in Zion, who has never had even the beginning of wisdom communicated to his soul.

When thus harassed and perplexed, he will at times and seasons, as his heart is made soft, cry out with fervency and importunity, as a beggar that will not take a denial, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." As though he would say, "Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness. I know I must go astray, if Thou dost not condescend to guide me. I have been betrayed a thousand times when I have trusted my own heart; I have been entangled in my base lusts; I have been puffed up by presumption; I have been carried away by hypocrisy and pride; I have been drawn aside into the world; I have never taken a single step aright when left to myself; and therefore feeling, how unable I am to guide myself a single step of the way, I come unto Thee, and ask Thee to 'send out Thy light and Thy truth,' that they may 'lead me,' for I am utterly unable to lead myself."

Now, to be brought here, is to be brought into the feeling of a child that is unable to walk except its parent holds it up; into the state of a traveller in an unknown country, who is unable to find his way except he has a guide; into the condition of a defenceless wife, who is unable to protect herself from assaults and violence, and looks to her husband to interpose in her behalf. And are not these the very characters that the church of Christ sustains—a little child—a pilgrim—and a wife? and to be brought into these states of experience, is to be an heir of the promises which are yea and amen in Christ.

III. But David, in desiring to be led, wished to arrive at a cer-

tain place; his eye was fixed on a certain spot. The desires of his soul were to the "holy hill" and to God's "tabernacles." He was not resting in past experiences, mark you. He was not taking the present feelings of his soul as evidences, and resting on them as such. He was not where many are who say, "Because I pray, because I desire, because I hunger and thirst after God, therefore I am a child of God." But the hungering and thirsting and desiring and panting of his soul were towards a certain object, after a certain spot; and till he came there, he could not rest satisfied; and yet was unable to find his way thither except so far as light and truth led him and brought him.

He could not, then, dispense with light and truth for a single step of his road. He did not say, as a man might to a guide whom he had asked to show him the way to a town, "I thank you for your kindness, but the town is in sight; I will trouble you no further;" but he wanted light and truth—those blessed handmaids—to guide him every step of the way, not to leave him for a single moment, but to bring him thoroughly into that spot to which his eyes turned, and towards which every desire of his soul centred.

1. And what was that spot? "Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill." What is this "holy hill" to which the soul of David longed to be brought? We read of it in the second psalm, where the Lord says, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The "holy hill," then, of which David here speaks is the "holy hill of Zion," upon which God the Father hath set His dear Son, that He might be King and Lord there, that He might there sit "as a Prince upon His throne, and the counsel of peace be between them both," where Jesus sits enthroned in glory, having grace in His hand to communicate to His poor and needy family.

Light and truth, then, David desired to be sent into his heart, that by them he might be brought unto this holy hill, and there enjoy sweet communion with the Lord Jesus. Depend upon it, friends, that whenever the Holy Spirit has quickened a man's soul into spiritual life, He will make him pant after an inward knowl-

edge of Jesus. The blessed Spirit will never suffer a living soul to rest short of the Son of God as made experimentally known in the conscience; and made known there as a living Jesus, as a suffering Lord, as a bleeding Lamb, as “a High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,” and as such, breathing into the soul which He brings to His footstool a measure of that holiness which dwells inexhaustibly in Him. No reckless Antinomian ever wanted to come to the holy hill. The hill on which he stands is the barren hill of presumption. He never longed in his soul, nor cried to a heart-searching God to bring him to the holy hill of Zion. He has no new nature whereby he thirsts after a holy God; he has no spiritual principle whereby he pants to know a pure and spotless Jesus. Sin is too sweet to his carnal mind for him to long to have it mortified and crucified in Him; he rolls it too much as a sweet morsel under his tongue, he is too madly in love with his darling lusts, to bring them to Jesus that He may slay them there. He brings no broken heart nor contrite spirit for a sacrifice unto the Lord; for if he can only get something to vamp him up in delusion and presumption, that he may have a name to live, and still retain his darling lusts, may still have his eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, he is well satisfied.

But the element of a soul that is born of God is to know a Holy Three-One Jehovah, a Holy Father, a Holy Son, and a Holy Spirit; and so to be brought near unto this holy Jesus as to receive a measure of His Spirit, to drink into His image, and to be conformed in some degree to His likeness. Whatever base sins I find in my heart (and I sometimes think that a more unclean, polluted wretch scarcely ever walked on God’s earth), I know that, when God the Spirit works on the soul, there are breathings after a Holy Jesus. I cannot take my sins and my corruptions and my base lusts unto God; I must leave them at the foot of the mount, as Abraham left the ass and the young men when he went up to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Our vile corruptions, our base desires, and

our carnal mind must be left at the foot of the mount, if we would go up to the top of the hill, there to have communion with Jesus. And sure am I that, wherever sin is indulged, wherever the base appetites of our carnal nature are greedily plunged into, be it in thought or imagination—not to speak of word or action—it bars and shuts out all access to a holy God; it effectually excludes all communion with a broken-hearted and suffering Jesus. Therefore he who has not been taught this lesson—to trample at times on his base appetites and filthy lusts—knows nothing of what it is to live under the Spirit's blessed operation. But the desire of a living soul is to come to the holy hill, there to enjoy sweet communion with the holy Jesus; there to have his base lusts crucified by the Lord of life and glory: and glad would he be (as I at times have felt) never to be tempted or troubled by those sensual workings again. Aye, he would, if he could, live as holy as God is holy, and as pure as God is pure. But when he comes down from the mount, he returns, as on another occasion Abraham did, "to his place," and finds, again and again, the workings of that base nature, which make him sigh and groan.

2. Connected with this "holy hill of Zion," there were God's "tabernacles." "Bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles." The temple erected by Solomon in Jerusalem, and the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness, were but types of the true temple, the Lord of life and glory. The Lord Himself said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"—speaking of His own body. All the beauty and glory of the temple were, therefore, figurative; they typified and shadowed forth the glory of Immanuel, for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God the Son has taken to Himself a body, according to those words in the fortieth Psalm, as quoted by Paul (Heb. 10:5): "A body hast Thou prepared Me"—a holy body, a sinless, spotless body; according to those words: "Therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," and not only a holy body, but united to it a holy, spotless soul. "He shall see of the travail of

His soul, and be satisfied." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). This holy body, as united with a holy soul, the two forming His spotless human nature, the Son of God took into union with Himself, and thus became the God-man, Immanuel, God with us. It is this glorious mystery of godliness that a living soul pants to know. We cannot approach pure Godhead, we cannot understand it, it is a mystery too high and too deep for us; for who, "by searching, can find out God?" "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:7, 8). But when God would make Himself known to the children of men, He made Himself known by His only-begotten Son, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, taking into union with Himself the flesh and blood of the children; and thus we can, so far as the Lord gives us faith, approach to an invisible God through the visible God-man; as John says: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And, therefore, when Philip said to Him (John 14:8), "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" And why, but because as He says in another place (John 10:30), "I and My Father are one."

The desire, then, of every living soul (I am sure it is my desire when the Lord is pleased to work it in my heart) is to be led by the Spirit of God into an acquaintance with the God-man, to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ; to see the Godhead shining through the manhood, and yet to see the manhood veiling and yet deriving glory from the Godhead; and thus to come to Jesus as a High Priest that is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; to feel nearness of access to the Father by approaching Him through the Son of His love; and thus to enjoy sweet communion with Immanuel, God with us, God in our

nature, God making Himself known by taking our flesh and blood into union with Himself.

In this blessed God-man then do all the affections of the renewed soul centre, to Him do the eyes of the living family look for the manifestation of the pardon of their sins, to this glorious Law-fulfiller does every travailing sinner turn, that he may catch, by the Holy Ghost opening his eyes, a glimpse of this God-man, and in seeing Him may see himself justified in Him. And thus in the longing desires of his soul, and the breathing forth of his heart, it is that he comes to the holy hill, and to God's tabernacles. Not to worship an unknown God—not to worship the God of creation, nor the God of providence, nor the God of his own carnal imagination, but to worship God in the tabernacle, that is, to worship God as giving the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now the Psalmist felt as every quickened soul feels—that he could not come to this holy hill, that he could not be brought into any acquaintance with these tabernacles, except light and truth were sent out of God's sanctuary into his heart, to lead him and to bring him there. And thus, if we look at the experience of God's saints, we shall find that these two things are, day by day, more or less working in them, first, a feeling of their own ignorance, darkness, blindness, and sinfulness, causing them to moan, and sigh, and cry unto God; and secondly, coupled with this, the panting cry that light might come into their soul to disperse this darkness, that truth might be shed abroad in their hearts to make them free indeed, and that they, by seeing this light and feeling this truth, might be led every step, kept every moment, guided every inch; and thus surrounded by light and encompassed by truth might be led in this mysterious path unto God's holy hill, there to find the solemn realities of a Saviour's love and blood, there to enjoy sweet communion with the Three-One God, there to know that God dwelleth with man of a truth, there to feel that God has a tabernacle, and in having a tabernacle has taken up His abode with man,

and by taking up His abode with man condescends to take up His abode in their hearts, and to manifest Himself unto them as He does not manifest Himself unto the world.

Every living soul is more or less here. It is an experience which accords with the teaching of the Holy Spirit in every soul into which He has breathed life. Some branches of Christian experience all the family of God are not as yet led into: there are depths into which God does not see fit to plunge all His redeemed; there are heights up to which He does not see fit as yet to lead all His ransomed. But the experience which I have been attempting to describe this morning, and of which I may venture to say that the Psalms, that manual of experience, are full, He communicates to each in his measure of all His ransomed family. There are many things in experience which only occur at distant intervals, under peculiar trials and temptations, but this branch which I have been endeavouring to unfold this morning is a matter more or less of daily experience in the heart of every one whom the Spirit has quickened into a spiritual and supernatural life. The very panting of the soul after the enjoyment of these things implies a relish for and a foretaste of them. Such shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of the Lord's house. But as certainly as the hungry soul shall be satisfied with good things, so he that lives and dies without knowing what it is to have light and truth sent into his soul, whereby he is led and brought unto the holy hill, there to know a holy God; and dies without being brought into some acquaintance with the tabernacles of God, so as to feel that God dwells with men of a truth; he that lives and dies without the vital knowledge of these things in his soul, will die in his sins, and where God is he will never come.

33 FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW THE LORD

Preached at Allington, near Devizes, on Lord's Day Afternoon,

September 19, 1841

“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

Hosea 6:3

Before I enter into the spiritual meaning of these words it will be necessary to see the connection of the passage with what precedes it. There is no more fruitful parent of error than to take detached portions of God’s Word, separated from their connection. Only so far as light is cast upon the Word of God by the blessed Spirit, and we in that light see its spiritual meaning, are we able to arrive at any right understanding of it; but that meaning will not be one distorted from the connection, nor one wrested from the place that it occupies, as a link torn from a complete chain, but will, for the most part, be in harmony with the context.

The words of the text are the language of Ephraim; but they are the language of Ephraim under particular circumstances, and as passing through a particular experience. They are not a promise thrown down for anybody to pick up; they are not words to be taken at random into everybody’s lips. Nor are they a promise addressed generally to the Church of God; but they set forth an experience of a peculiar nature; and therefore only so far as we have some acquaintance with that experience are the words suitable to us.

We will, then, with God’s blessing, look back a little at this and the preceding chapter (for they are both closely connected), and endeavour, with God’s help, to trace out what was the experience of Ephraim at the time that he uttered these words; and then we shall perhaps more clearly see the difference between the language of faith and the language of presumption.

1. In the twelfth verse of the preceding chapter, the Lord says: “Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.” This casts a light on the dealings of God with Ephraim. Ephraim had wrapped himself up in a robe; he had

covered himself with a garment, but not of God's Spirit. Now the Lord threatens that He "will be unto Ephraim as a moth." That is, He will fret this garment; He will (to use a familiar expression) make holes in it; it shall not be a complete garment to cover him, but it shall be moth-eaten and rotten, so that, dropping to pieces bit by bit, it could neither cover his nakedness nor shield him from God's all-searching eye. We find the Psalmist, in (Psalm 39:11), making use of the same figure, and a very striking one it is. "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:" or as it is in the old version, preserved in the Common Prayer Book, "like as it were a moth fretting a garment."

These words then show us just where Ephraim was in soul experience. Ephraim does not represent one destitute of spiritual light and life, but a quickened vessel of mercy, and yet one who, for want of the moth and the rottenness, was wrapping himself up in a garment, not of God's giving, nor of the Spirit's application, that is, not the glorious robe of Christ's imputed righteousness cast around him by the Spirit of God.

Now I firmly believe that there are many persons who have the fear of God in their hearts who are wrapping themselves up in a covering which is not of God's Spirit, and therefore, as the prophet speaks, "add sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1). Not having been led into a deep acquaintance with the spirituality of God's law, not having had all their refuges of lies broken up, they wrap themselves up in a covering which is not of God's Spirit; and they fancy that this garment in which they are wrapped up is the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness, merely because they believe in the doctrine of Christ's righteousness. But that cutting expression, "a covering, but not of My Spirit," shows that there is something more to be known than the bare doctrine of Christ's righteousness, and that the very doctrine itself becomes a lying refuge, when the mere letter of truth is sheltered in, and the Holy Ghost does not experimentally make it known to the soul.

The Lord, then, seeing precisely where Ephraim was, says, "I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness." That is, just in the same way as when a man takes out of his chest or wardrobe a dress which he has laid up there perhaps for months, and when he holds this dress up to the light he finds that the moth has been there, has laid its eggs and fretted it, made holes in it, and absolutely spoiled it; so Ephraim, after having laid up his garment in his wardrobe, the Bible, and with great inward satisfaction having often looked upon it, when the hour of temptation and distress comes, and he would bring out this robe to wear, finds it all rent and torn, fretted and spoiled. The rents in Ephraim's covering were not seen until it was brought out to the light; but when beheld in the light of God's countenance, the moth-holes were visible, and it was found to be all dropping to pieces.

2. "And to the house of Judah as rottenness." That is, when Judah comes to put a strain upon the prop on which he leans, it breaks. That is the idea of rottenness. The old cable will do very well until there is a strain put upon it: but then, if it be rotten, it parts asunder, and the vessel falls upon the rocks. Thus the Lord says, "I will be to Judah as rottenness;" not "rottenness;" that cannot be, for that would imply corruption; but, "I will do the same thing spiritually that rottenness is naturally. I will make all his props to be to him as rotten; I will so spoil them in his experience, that, as Bildad speaks (Job 8:15), he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."

3. But what is the effect of "the moth" and the "rottenness?" Will it at once cure Ephraim of his idolatries, and turn him to the stronghold as a prisoner of hope? No; not yet. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Ephraim will not then turn to the Lord. No; He is the last to whom he will go. He has a sickness, but the Assyrian shall be his physician; he sees his wound, but King Jareb shall be his surgeon: but it shall be all in vain, for the first cannot

cure, and the second cannot heal.

And has not this been in a measure our case? When our false religion gave way, when the moth fretted our garments, and rottenness mouldered our props, was there not a secret leaning on an arm of flesh, a going to the Assyrian, a sending to King Jareb, a looking to the creature in some shape or another to bring ease and peace? But the wound could not be healed; there was no balm to be found from the creature; the moth had so fretted the garment that there was no patching it up again; the prop had become so rotten that it was no longer able to bear any weight.

4. But the Lord does not mean to leave Ephraim either to self-righteousness or to despair. He, therefore, says, "will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him." Here the Lord speaks of Himself as being a lion unto Ephraim: that is, just as a lion rends a man to pieces, so will the Lord spiritually rend Ephraim. "I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them" (Hos 13:8).

But what was this dealing with the Lord upon their souls for? Was it to destroy them? to rend them actually to pieces, so that none could deliver? This was not His object; it was to rend away everything that stood in the way of His grace, or that was substituted for His grace: to tear away false hopes, and rotten props, and creature expectations, so as to leave nothing, absolutely nothing, on which the creature could hang for support.

5. Now as long as the Lord is thus entering into controversy with Ephraim, there is in Ephraim's mind little else but murmuring, repining, fretting, rebellion, dissatisfaction, despondency, almost despair. And with all that, he cannot really pour out his soul before God, nor can he find or feel any nearness of access to a throne of grace. But the Lord, secretly, in His own time and way, pours into Ephraim's soul the Spirit of grace and supplications; "He

goes and returns to His place,” until Ephraim is brought to his right mind; until rebellion is, in some measure, lulled in Ephraim’s soul; until these waves are in some degree calmed, and he is brought to that spot spoken of in (Lev. 26:41), “to accept of the punishment of his iniquity,” to own that the Lord is righteous, and that He would be just if He sent him to hell.

6. Being thus divinely wrought upon, a blessed change takes place. Ephraim’s heart now begins to work before the Lord; his bowels melt, his soul is softened, his spirit meekened. He is no longer struggling like a wild bull in a net; nor kicking like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; he is no longer full of inward rebellion; but by the secret work of God in his soul, he is humbled and quieted, so as to lie low at God’s footstool. “He acknowledges his offence, and seeks His face.” A change, which he could never have wrought himself, comes over him; and, under the meekening operations of the Holy Ghost in his soul, he is brought to repentance and confession. He draws near, therefore, with these words in his mouth: “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.”

7. But what language is this of Ephraim? Is it the language of creature-faith? Is it the language of daring presumption? Is it the language of free-will? No, none of these; it is the language of spiritual faith, the Lord having kindled in Ephraim’s soul a measure of divine faith, whereby he is enabled to return. “Come,” he says (as the prodigal said, ‘I will arise and go to my father’), “come, let us return.” Here is his soul going out after the Lord; he is no longer labouring under rebellion and fretfulness; but a meekness and a quietness have been produced in his spirit. The Beloved has put in His hand by the hole of the door, and Ephraim’s bowels are moved for Him (Song 5:4). The stony heart has become a heart of flesh; and his pride, stubbornness, and rebellion having all melted away, he cries, “Come, and let us return to the Lord.” It is with Ephraim now as it is with the Church as described in (Hosea 2:7), when she says with melting heart and weeping eyes, “I will go and return to

my first Husband; for then was it better with me than now."

In this language, then, of Ephraim we see the return of affection, living desires kindled, faith communicated and drawn into exercise, godly sorrow at work in the soul, al the breathing and going forth of prayer and supplication from the heart. O what a different feeling this is from rebellion and self-pity! And, depend upon it, friends, until the soul is thus meekened, softened, and brought down by the work of the Spirit upon it, there will be no saying with living faith, "Come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us." It is, therefore, not the daring language of presumption, but the accents of living fait "He hath torn our souls with conviction; He hath smitten with sorrow of heart; from Him came the wound, and fro the same hand must come the remedy."

8. "After two days will He revive us; in the third day will He raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." In this mention of Ephraim's being raised up on the third day, there is doubtless an allusion to the resurrection of Jesus-Ephraim's covenant Head; for it is only in consequence, their union with their Head, that the members are quickened from their death in sin, are revived in their bondage (Ezra 9:8; Psalm 85:6), and will be raised up at the la day. "Thy dead men shall live; together with My dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26:19). Thus Ephraim speaks in the language of faith—"After two days" (a definite time for an indefinite one) "will He revive us"—that is, out of all our darkness and bondage; "in the third day will He raise us up" by the power of Christ's resurrection, and, as thus rising with Jesus, "we shall live in His sight." Faith was here at work. The Lord gave to Ephraim this sweet confidence, and wrought in his soul a powerful persuasion of coming deliverance.

Now it is absolutely necessary to take all these things into connection with the text in order to understand its meaning. The language here employed by Ephraim is not such as can be taken into any one's mouth. It is that "fruit of the lips" which the Lord specially "created" (Isaiah 57:19) and the root from which this

special fruit sprang was the experience that has been described. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," is not then a general declaration which anybody may claim, but the special language of faith in a living soul, and of that only as having passed through such an experience as has been described.

Having thus cleared our way a little, we come to the text. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

I. We gather, then, from these words, that there is such a thing in soul experience as "a following on to know the Lord:" and indeed there is no obtaining the blessings which are laid up for the righteous, unless there is this following on. "To know the Lord" is the desire of every living soul; that is, to know Him by His own divine manifestations, by the gracious revelation of His grace, His love, His presence, and His glory. And whatever measure of knowledge a child of God may have of the Lord, it will always seem in his mind to be an imperfect and deficient knowledge. The blessed apostle Paul, who had been in the third heavens, seemed still comparatively to know Him not, and therefore says, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection;" as though all his knowledge of Christ was but as a drop compared with the ocean—as though all his experience was but as a single ray compared with the body of light and heat that dwells in the sun.

"To know the Lord" is to know experimentally and spiritually the power of Jesus' blood and righteousness; to know our eternal union with Him; to know Him so as to be led by the Spirit into soul communion with Him, that we may talk with Him as a man talketh with his friend; to know Him so that the secrets of His heart should be revealed to us, and we enter by faith into the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; to know Him so as to drink into His Spirit, and to have His image stamped by the Holy Ghost upon our souls; to know Him as coming down into our hearts out of His glorious sanctuary,

filling our souls with His presence and His love; to know Him as formed in us the hope of glory, making our bodies His temple, dwelling in us, breathing Himself into us, speaking in us, moving as it were every affection of our heart and every faculty of our soul.

Thus to know the Lord is the sum and substance of vital godliness. And, as “to know the Lord” implies, as well as comprehends, the knowledge of Jehovah in His Trinity of Persons and Unity of essence, well may we say that, to know Jehovah the Father in His eternal love, to know Jehovah the Son in His redeeming blood, and to know Jehovah the Spirit in His divine operations and blessed teaching, is the foretaste of bliss below; and to know and see God as He is, is the consummation of bliss above.

But the expression “follow on,” implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances in a man’s way, which keep him back from “knowing the Lord.” We will look at a few of these.

1. Sometimes, for instance, a thought like this will rush into the mind: “My religion is all in the flesh; God did not begin with me: I fear I am nothing else but a base hypocrite; and I have taken up a profession of religion, without the Lord the Spirit leading me into the truth as it is in Jesus.” Now, when a solemn dread of this kind, perhaps in the lonely watches of the night, falls, as it were, like a ton of lead into a man’s heart, it seems for the time effectually to check all the goings forth of his soul. In whatever state of mind he be, when it seems dropped into his conscience with conviction that he is nothing but a base hypocrite, it seems to cut the thread of all his religion; it effectually stops him from making any movement towards God. He will indeed sigh and groan as a forlorn and lost wretch; but the actings of faith are so damped, that he seems to be nothing but an awful reprobate in the sight of God, and he fears that hell will be his portion for ever.

2. Sometimes when the soul is following eagerly on to know the Lord, Satan will hurl some blasphemous suggestion into our carnal mind. This fiery dart shall so kindle into a blaze those combustible materials of which our carnal nature is full, that it shall

set them all on fire. There is no “following on” now to know the Lord, the soul is driven back upon itself; and as it recoils with horror from the imaginations that possess it, it draws back from all approach unto God, fearing to come within the pale of His holy presence, as conscious that His heart-searching eye sees all the abominations that are working within.

3. Sometimes the remembrance of past sins lying as a heavy load on the conscience so presses a man down into despondency and well-nigh despair, that it seems impossible for him to move one step towards Zion. He looks back on his past life, he calls to mind all his sins against God; and they appear so monstrous, so aggravated, so horrible, so black, that it seems utterly impossible they can be washed away, blotted out, and freely forgiven; and this keeps him from following on.

4. Sometimes the gusts of infidelity will so blow on a man’s mind as to make him doubt the reality of all religion; aye, for a time persuade him that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, and that everything which others say they have felt, and even what he has felt himself, was a delusion. Objections innumerable start up in his mind against the Scriptures; and Satan plies every argument that is suitable to nature and reason, till faith appears driven out of the field, and infidelity to riot at large in the soul. Whilst these gusts blow, I am very sure there is no following on to know the Lord; nor until a lull comes, and faith once more lifts her drooping head, is there any power to move forward.

5. Sometimes the recollection of the many inconsistencies, the many foolish thoughts, the foolish words, and foolish and even sinful actions that a man has committed since he made a profession, so stand like mountains of difficulty in the way, that he is utterly unable to pass over them; and thus they check and keep him from following on to know the Lord; for he says to himself, “If I were really a partaker of the grace of God, I should never have acted in this way; the Lord would never have suffered me to commit this or that sin: surely I can be nothing but a base hypocrite, and the grace

of God can never have touched my heart.”

6. Sometimes mountains of worldly trouble stand in his way. His religion brings a cross with it. It calls down perhaps the persecution of his relatives; his children or his wife, his master or his parents oppose him; persons from whom he derives his daily bread set their faces against him; and his worldly prospects so stand in the way of his religion that he must either give them up, or the things of God. Here then sometimes the soul comes to a stand; it cannot go forward or backward; it cannot turn to the right hand or to the left: flesh pleads so hard, and faith is so weak; the right path is so rugged, and yet conscience remonstrates so loudly against the wrong, that a step can be taken in neither direction, and this prevents him from “following on to know the Lord.”

7. Sometimes such darkness besets the mind, such clouds of unbelief rest on the soul, the way is so obscure, the path so out of sight, and we so unable to see any road at all, that we cannot “follow on,” because we know not which way to go. Job was here when he said, “O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him.” Darkness besets his path; and like a man in a dark night, he could not move a single step forward, lest he should fall down some precipice, or go out of the road altogether.

Now the work of the Spirit in a man’s soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles. Nature, and all the work of nature, and all the power of Satan working on nature, is to draw the man back; but the work of the Spirit on the soul is to lead him forward, to keep alive in him the fear of God, to strengthen him from time to time with strength in his inner man, to give him those enlargements, to drop in those hopes, to communicate that inward grace, and to gird up the loins of his mind, so that in spite of sense, reason, and nature, he is compelled to follow on. Sometimes he seems driven and sometimes drawn, sometimes led and sometimes carried—but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon

him that, though he scarce knows how, he still “follows on.” His very burdens make him groan for deliverance; his very temptations cause him to cry for help; the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step; the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide: so that the Lord the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on; and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, till He sets him before the Lord in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. I am often a marvel to myself, that ever I should experience any revival, feeling at times such barrenness, such leanness, such deadness, such carnality, such inability to any spiritual thought. I have been often astonished that ever I could preach, that ever I could pray—astonished when the Lord’s day comes that I should have a text to preach from, any life in my soul, or any power to say anything for the edification of God’s people. I believe a living man is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly; worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles, that he is a miracle of mercy, and, as the apostle says, “a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1Corinthians 4:9); the world wondering, the angels admiring, and men standing astonished, how the quickened soul is carried on amidst all its difficulties, obstacles, trials, and temptations; and yet in spite of all—“following on.”

But “following on” for what? “To know the Lord” as the sum and substance of all religion, as the very marrow of vital godliness; to know Jesus, so as by faith to enter into His beauty and loveliness, and feel ourselves one spirit with Him, according to those words, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1Corinthians 6:17).

But the Church, speaking thus in the person of Ephraim, says, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” What shall she know? She shall know that the Lord’s hand supported her through all her temptations, that none of the devices of Sa-

tan against her have prospered, that all her temporal trials have worked together for her good, that God has made use of the things that seemed most against her that they might be most for her, and that He has overruled every dispensation so as to make it a dispensation of mercy. She shall know that her first convictions were of God, that the first dawnings of light and life upon her soul were from Him, that He held her up when she must otherwise have utterly fallen, and that when Satan came in like a flood, it was the Spirit of the Lord that lifted up a standard against him. She shall know, too, that God was the Author and the Finisher of her faith, the source of her hope, and the fountain of her love. She shall know that she has not had one trial too heavy, nor shed one tear too much, nor put up one groan too many; but that all these things have in a most mysterious and inexplicable manner worked together for her spiritual good.

Now, friends, till we know something experimentally of the Lord we cannot know all this; till we know more or less of Jesus by His own sweet manifestations, the cloud is not taken up from our religion. Doubts, fears, despondencies, inexplicable mysteries will rest upon our path—both on our path in providence, and on our path in grace. But when we are brought to know Jesus, it is like the sun shining in the midst of the sky. Until the sun shines, mists and fogs hover over the scene; but when the sun arises, then the mists and fogs disperse, and the whole path shines forth outstretched to view. So when the Lord brings the soul into some sweet communion with Jesus, and He is made experimentally known, then it sees that the Lord has led it all these years in the wilderness; then it knows how kindly, and gently, and mercifully, and wisely He has dealt with it; then it feels as a matter of personal, individual, practical experience, that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”

II. But we pass on to consider another prominent feature of our text; and that closely connected with the preceding. “His going forth is prepared as the morning.” The Lord had said in the

foregoing chapter, “I will go and return to My place;” that is, “I will hide Myself from Ephraim; he shall call, but I will not answer; he shall cry, but I will not appear.” Now this is a part of experience through which every living soul passes—to know what it is to seek the Lord, and not find Him; to call upon Him, and receive no answer; to feel that the clouds of darkness so hide the throne of God as not to be able to see it, nor come near it, and yet to know that He is there.

And here lies the difference between a living soul in his darkest hours and a dead professor. A living soul knows that God is to be found of His saints, but cannot always, nor often find Him for himself; but a dead professor knows nothing about God at all. The darkest fog might cover the downs that “heave up their broad backs into the sky” a little distance from where we now are; still I know they are there, because I have seen them again and again; but a thorough stranger to the country, who was passing for the first time through this valley, would not know that they were there, because the fog would hide them altogether from his view. So a soul that has seen anything of the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, knows that there is His dwelling-place (Exodus 25:8), His goings (Psalms 68:24), and His way; and, like Jonah, “looks again toward His holy temple,” though clouds and darkness entirely surround Him. But a dead professor of religion has never by faith entered into that sanctuary, nor lifted up believing hands toward His holy oracle (Psalms 28:2); and, therefore, as he knows nothing of light, knows nothing of darkness. All is with him a dead unmeaning service.

It is, then, to the living soul walking in darkness, and unable to find God, that the text speaks: “His going forth is prepared as the morning.” There is an appointed time for the Lord to go forth; and this is sweetly compared to the rising of the sun. Does not “the dayspring know his place?” (Job 38:12). Does not the sun arise every day according to the minute before appointed? Is he ever before his time, or ever after his time? Did the free will of the crea-

ture ever hurry or retard his rising for a single second? Thus it is with the going forth of the Lord for the salvation of His people (Habakkuk 3:13), the going forth of the Lord in the revelation of His presence and His power, the going forth of the Lord from the place where He has for a while hidden Himself, to come down with light and life into the soul. All His glorious goings forth are as much prepared, and the moment is as much appointed, as the time is fixed every morning for the sun to rise.

But what is the state of things naturally, before the sun rises? Does not midnight precede the dawn, does not darkness come before light? And when it is midnight naturally, can we bid the sun arise and disperse the darkness? Is there not, as the psalmist says, a waiting for the morning naturally? "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning" (Psalm 130:6). Is there not the invalid tossing on his restless couch, waiting for the morning? Is there not the shipwrecked mariner driven on the rocks, waiting anxiously for the morning, to know what is his prospect of safety, what friendly sail may be in sight? Is not the man benighted on the downs waiting for the morning, that the sun may arise, and he find his way homeward? But with all their waiting, they cannot bid the sun arise; they must wait till the appointed time. So the going forth of the Sun of Righteousness, the appearance of Christ in the heart, the sweet revelation of the Son of God, the lifting up of the light of His blessed countenance, is "prepared as the morning"—as fixed, as appointed in the mind of God as the morning to come in its season; but no more to be hurried than the sun is to be hurried up the sky. Aye, and it is as much an impossibility for us to bring the Lord into our souls before the appointed time, or keep Him there when He is come, as for us to play the part of Joshua, and say, "Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."

But "His going forth is prepared as the morning," and when He goes forth, He goes forth "conquering and to conquer," mounted on the white horse spoken of in Revelation (Revelation 6:2). He

goes forth to conquer our enemies, to overcome our temptations, to lay our souls at His footstool, to arise like the sun in his strength, and to come into the heart with healing in His wings.

III. But we have another figure added, which shows the fruit and effect of His coming: "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." His going forth is compared to the rising of the sun—glorious and certain; His coming to the rain—softening and fertilizing. And there is something very sweet not only in the figure itself—rain, but "in the latter and former rain" spoken of. To understand the spiritual, we must first know the natural meaning of this figure. In the land of Palestine there are not, as in our country, showers at all seasons of the year; generally speaking, there was only rain at two periods—one was called the former rain, and the other the latter rain. Thus we find that the prophet Samuel makes it a miracle, that God should send thunder and rain in the wheat harvest. It would not be a miracle with us, it is a common occurrence: but it is so unusual in those countries to have rain in harvest, that the prophet Samuel speaks of it as a miracle, and as a sign that God was displeased for their asking a king (1Sam. 12:17, 18). The Hebrews began their civil year in the autumn. Thus "the former or early rain" was the rain that fell in the autumn, and "the latter rain" that which fell in the spring. Now the former rain came upon the seed in the autumn, when it was committed to the furrow, and falling upon it, caused it to germinate and spring up. The latter rain fell in the spring upon the growing crop, and brought it forward for the harvest, which was much earlier there than with us, the barley harvest being at the time of the Passover, or our Easter, and the wheat harvest at the feast of Pentecost, or our Whitsuntide.

Now I think that in this early (or as it is here called, "former") and latter rains, we have a sweet figure of the visitations of Christ to the soul. The early rain, which comes first, is the first sight which the soul has of Christ—the season of the first love, the day of the espousals, when we go after the Lord into a land not sown (Jeremiah

2:2), when the Lord allures us, (as He speaks in Hosea 2:14) into the wilderness; the first days of the Son of man: the season that Job speaks of, when he says, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (Job 29:2,3,4). "The days of my youth"—that is, the days of his spiritual youth—when he first fell in love with Jesus, and was full of zeal and warmth for His honour and glory.

Christ then first comes as the former rain which falls on the seed committed to the furrows, and makes it spring up vigorous and strong. But there is a winter to come after that. The Hebrews, as I have just said, began their year in the autumn, at which season the former rain fell. There was a winter then to pass through afterwards; there were frosts to nip the young wheat; there were long, cold, chilling nights to make it turn yellow in the blade; it often became stunted and sickly, and seemed to go backward rather than forward, and so it continued until the second or latter rain came in the spring.

Does not this well set forth the experience of the soul? After the first rain of Christ's presence and Christ's grace and power has come on the seed of truth in the heart, there follows the long winter, when the blades of faith, hope and love turn sickly and yellow, aye, sometimes (as we saw a few winters back), even the very blade gone, so that the wheat seems dead, as though all the crop were utterly destroyed; and yet life in the root, yet life struggling on, but still unable to spring forth until warmth and rain should come to make it shoot afresh. And then, after all this long winter, drops down in the appointed time the latter rain just before the harvest, the warm showers falling on it just before the Lord "putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:29). Here is the smile of the Lord upon the soul just before He takes it home, the breathing of His presence and love before He gathers it to be finally and everlastingly in His bosom.

Now it is said "He shall come" in this way, first in the espousals, and then in the wedding; first in the sowing of the seed, and then in the reaping of the harvest; first to make it germinate and come up out of the soil, covered with the thick clods, and then to fill the ear before it is gathered into the garner to be for ever with the Lord.

The Church speaks here in a spirit of prophecy. If I may use an expression, which perhaps you will hardly receive unless I explain it—the Church here believes for her children. Not believes for them in a way of justification, as though her faith could be any substitute for theirs, or be any way available for their salvation; I mean not that; but believes for them in the way of experience. We often find this as a daily matter of fact. A man who has passed through some severe trial of soul and been delivered, when he sees another in the same trial, can believe for him, though the man passing through it cannot believe for himself. So the Church in this way believes for her children. She believes in the Lord's faithfulness, and being favoured with strong confidence in His mercy, opens her arms wide, and prophesies of the visitations of His favour to all her children.

And now before I close, let me gather up my fragments, and run over what I have endeavoured to unfold of the meaning of the text. There is then a following on to know the Lord, after the soul has been smitten, wounded, and torn; and he that thus follows on to know the Lord amidst all the difficulties and troubles of the way will surely know Him to his eternal joy; for His going forth is prepared as the morning which must arise in its appointed time. Nor will He go forth only "as the light in the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2Samuel 23:4), but He will also come "as the latter and former rain unto the earth." He will come unto every parched soul that feels itself like a barren wilderness, as the latter and the former rain, to water the ridges thereof abundantly, to settle the furrows thereof, to make it soft with showers, to bless the springing thereof, that the valleys may be covered over with corn, that they may shout for joy, and also sing (Psalms 65:10,13).

We see, then, that the words of the text are not such expressions as any professor of religion may take into his lips. They are not to be thrown down by the minister from the pulpit to encourage anybody and everybody, whether they know anything of divine dealings or not. They are not to be held out as an encouragement to carnal people, that they are to follow on to know the Lord, and make themselves religious, whether God work in them or not. But they are spoken to those who have passed through a certain experience, and are prophetic of the happy termination of that experience. And all who are passing through it know something of the things I have been speaking of; they know something of the difficulties of the road, something of following on in spite of those difficulties; and something too, at times, of a sweet confidence and blessed persuasion in their souls that they shall know the end of the present trials, and the reason of the Lord's dispensation, believing in their very hearts, by the Spirit's inward testimony, that the going forth of the Lord is prepared as the morning, and that He will come in His own appointed time and way, as the latter and the former rain unto the earth.

34 HEAVENLY ATTRACTION AND SPIRITUAL OBEDIENCE

Preached on Thursday Evening, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

July 7th, 1842,

"Draw me; we will run after Thee."

Sol. Song 1:4

A pestilent doctrine has lately been imported into this country from Germany, that this blessed book—the Song of Solomon—is not of divine inspiration, and that it ought therefore to be expunged from the canonical Scriptures. Now this is the downward progress of error. Men begin first with denying the inward revelation of the Person, work, blood, and love of Christ by the Holy

Ghost in the hearts of the elect; and then they proceed to deny the outward revelation of the mind of Christ by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of truth; and, by and by, unless the Lord prevent, they will land in sheer infidelity. Such has been the case in Germany, with the churches founded by Luther; and such it is to be feared will be the case in the great mass of the Dissenting churches among us, if we may judge from present appearances. It is the want of divine teaching in the soul, and of an experience corresponding with that described in the Song of Solomon, that leads men to reject the inspiration and divine authority of this blessed book. Having seen no glory of Christ in their own souls, having felt no heavenly beams of His love and grace in their own hearts, having experienced no castings down nor liftings up, similar to those described in the Song of Solomon, their carnal minds see nothing in these beautiful images of a deeply spiritual and experimental nature; and therefore, not being able from a sweet experience to enter into those heavenly mysteries of divine love betwixt Christ and His Church that are set forth in this inspired Song, their polluted imagination turns into carnality all that the Holy Ghost has there revealed of a spiritual nature. "To the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit. 1:15). And thus their unbelieving mind and defiled conscience have combined to reject as uninspired the sweetest expression of the loves of Christ and His Bride that is to be found in the Scriptures.

We must leave these men, however, to the deceits and subtle delusions of the father of lies, from whom this lie came. Deceived by him, on they will go in their downward progress. And it will be our mercy if we can lift up our hearts to the Lord, and thank Him for having taught us otherwise.

Now I think if we look at the Song of Solomon we shall see in it different states and stages of divine experience. I believe we should be wrong if we considered that the Bride—who speaks in my text—was in one uniform state or stage of experience all through

the book. But she begins at a certain spot, to which I shall presently call your attention; and the Lord leads her on step by step, fulfilling in her that sweet word, that “the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

What, then, is the spiritual stage in which the church is found in the opening of this book? I will endeavour to explain it as far as I see, or have any experience of it.

The Bride, judging from her words to the Lord in the first verse of this book, had felt a measure of His love shed abroad in her heart. Now this pre-supposes that she had been taught by the blessed Spirit her deep need of Jesus; it pre-supposes that she was deeply acquainted with the guilt of sin, and the corruption of her depraved nature. Nor is this merely pre-supposed, or faintly implied; it is expressed in actual words; for she says, “Look not upon me, because I am black.” She here expresses what were the feelings of her heart—that she was altogether black; not partly fair and partly dark, but black altogether. Women in the East never go abroad without a veil, which preserves their complexion; but she had been thrust out, stripped of this protection, as she speaks afterwards: “The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.” And being thrust out into the wilderness, and exposed to the burning sun of temptation, she became “black as the tents of Kedar,” which being made of black goat’s hair, as well as continually exposed to heat and dust, had not a white thread in them. Being thus blackened, and filled with self-loathing, she says to the daughters of Jerusalem, “Look not upon me, because I am black.” And yet, black though she was, she had received into her heart such a measure of the blood and righteousness of her dear Lord, and she had experienced such a sense of His love “shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost,” that she could say “she was comely;” and vents the language of her soul towards her Beloved in that abrupt but impassioned language, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Thy love is better than wine.” Now had she never felt any taste of Christ’s love, she never would have said,

“Thy love is better than wine;” and had she never known any sweet manifestation of it, she never would have used the language, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” The kiss is the tenderest expression of love; and thus her words imply not only that she knew there was love in the bosom of her Redeemer, but that there had been some manifestation, some expression of that love, which she longed again to experience.

“Because of the savour of Thy good ointments, Thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love Thee.” Connected, then, with this love that she had to the Redeemer, and with this experience of its sweetness, as “shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost,” there was an inward sense of the savour of His name. He had drawn near to her holy garments. Their love was a consecrated one; and to her of a sanctifying nature. Though expressed in terms of creature love, it was altogether spiritual and heavenly. The very words of Christ to her, “My sister, my spouse” (4:10), show the purity of their affection. And, therefore, having felt the sanctifying, consecrating nature of this love, she speaks of “the savour of His good ointments;” and that “His name was to her as ointment poured forth.”

And this brings us to the text—“Draw me; we will run after thee.” We have in these words, first, a prayer—“Draw me,” and then we have what she knew in her soul would be the consequence, if that prayer were heard and answered—“We will run after Thee.”

I. In the short and simple prayer, “Draw me,” we shall find, if the Lord shall be pleased to lead us into its contents, much experimental truth contained.

I. We find, first, that in it is couched a deep sense of spiritual necessity. She would never have asked the Lord to “draw her,” unless there had been wrought in her soul a feeling of deep necessity, penniless poverty, thorough bankruptcy, and entire insolvency. But what had reduced her to this penniless condition? Why, guilt laid upon her conscience. And I would ask what else but guilt, pressing upon the conscience, can ever make a man really desire the blood

of sprinkling? It seems absurd to me, that a man who has never been cut up by convictions of sin and guilt should want a Saviour. It seems absurd that any should want the application of the atoning blood of Jesus, but he that carries about with him a guilty conscience; or that he should desire to have a sweet revelation of His glorious righteousness—that comely robe—unless he shivers and shrinks from a sense of his nakedness before the heart-searching presence of Him whose “eyes behold, and whose eyelids try the children of men.” Nor can I comprehend how anyone can want to have anything to do with Jesus, unless there has been raised up in his soul, by the blessed Spirit, such a sight and sense of his own baseness, blackness, and vileness, as shall make such a Saviour as is revealed in the Scriptures, a suitable Saviour to him.

2. But again; the word, “draw me,” pre-supposes also a deep sense of helplessness. Unless the Church, using this expression, was absolutely helpless, as well as absolutely necessitous—unless she were (as the Scripture speaks), “without strength” (Rom. 5:6), she could not call upon her Lord to “draw her;” for there would have been in her some strength to move towards Him, independent of His powerful attraction. Had she a grain of strength left, she need not have called upon the Lord to draw her. Were there in her any power to move a step forward, distinct from the attraction of His Spirit within, it would have been a superfluous word for her to make use of.

The very expression, then, that proceeds from her lips, “Draw me,” necessarily implies a sense of her own utter helplessness to move a single step unless she felt the powerful cords of His love and grace in her heart. Now this is a feeling common to all the family of God; they know experimentally, and they know painfully, what it is to be without help and without strength. But why do they know it? and why are all others ignorant of the secret? Because the quickened family of God know, each according to his measure, what divine power is; they have at times felt what it is to be “holpen with a little help,” and to receive the strength of God

into their souls, according to those words, "In the day when I cried, Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" (Ps. 138:3). And having once tasted this strength, all short of this strength is weakness. The Lord says, "No man, having drunk old wine, straitway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." But what showed this man the difference betwixt old wine and new? It was having drunk it. So it is with respect to the secret of divine strength and natural strength. What shows a man the difference betwixt the two? It is having tasted a measure of divine strength put forth in his soul. And thus the regenerated family of God never can be cheated with that Arminian delusion of creature strength, because the Lord has let down into their hearts such a measure of spiritual life and heavenly light, of sovereign grace and supernatural strength, that, having tasted this gospel wine, they know it from all other; and having once felt it, having been thus initiated into "the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him," when they are destitute of this strength, they feel themselves utterly helpless, utterly weak, and utterly impotent. A man may indeed stand very high in a profession of religion, but if he has not, like Samson, had his locks cut, if he has not been impoverished in his soul, and painfully felt his utter weakness and helplessness, he is not really in the secret as to the difference between natural strength and supernatural. Samson, when his locks were cut, thought he would go out as before, and "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him;" but directly the Philistines came upon him, he learned in a moment that his strength was gone. Thus it is sometimes with God's children; their spiritual locks have been secretly cut, and they perhaps are at the same time unaware that their strength has departed from them; but let some temptation come, let some powerful enemy fall upon them, and they begin to find, with Samson, that all their strength is gone, and dried up as a potsherd. In this deep state of helplessness was the Bride, when she poured forth this impassioned prayer in the ears of her heavenly Lover, "Draw me."

3. But again; there was something in her conscience more than

guilt, and there was something in her soul more than weakness; she had “tasted that the Lord was gracious:” she had received a measure of divine love into her heart. This it was which, mysteriously blending with guilt and helplessness, set her soul on fire; this it was which enkindled her affections, and drew forth the longing desires of her heart. Hart speaks of some:

“Not drawn by love, nor driv’n by fear;”

but the Bride had not merely that which drove her (such as guilt and necessity), but she had also that which drew her, “the cords of love and the bands of a man;” the puttings forth of the Redeemer’s grace in her soul, which He Himself speaks of as “putting in His hand by the hole of the door.” Now it is perfectly true that we are driven before we are drawn, and this is symbolised in Scripture very sweetly by the cities of refuge. The man-slayer was not drawn to those cities of refuge by any affection which he had towards them, but he was driven to them by the weight of guilt—by being a man of blood. And so the elect of God, under the first teachings of the Spirit, are driven through fear, through guilt, through necessity, to seek a refuge. But when once they have sheltered their souls in the Rock of Ages, and the Lord has received them into His loving arms, and given them some taste that He is gracious, then there is the putting forth of another principle, the working of another movement in their hearts, which is sweetly set forth in this petition of the Bride, “Draw me; we will run after Thee.”

His supernatural beauty (for “He is fairer than the children of men”) had smitten her with love; and longing to get near, but crippled and paralysed with guilt and helplessness, all she could say was, “Draw me.”

So that if we look at her in her state and stage of experience as here set forth, we shall find these two things working in her soul; two things different in kind, and yet both tending to the same spot. First, a sense of her necessity, her guilt, her helplessness, so that she could not do, could not live without a Saviour; and sec-

ondly, the affections of her heart were moved towards Him; so that in her were blended the being driven by necessity and the being drawn by love.

But what should raise up in her soul this earnest and impassioned cry, "Draw me?" Must she not have seen something in the Lord which enkindled her affections? Must she not have had a sight of some supernatural beauty, that drew forth these warm desires after Him? Yea, surely. The Lord had shown her His lovely Person; and a sight of that glorious Person had won all her heart.

But what is this glorious Person? and what is there in this glorious Person that it should so draw forth the affections of the renewed and regenerated soul? This glorious Person is the incarnate God, the only begotten Son of the Father manifest in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us. And it is in the mysterious and indissoluble union of these two natures in one Person that His supernatural beauty consists.

The Deity of the Son of God shines all through the sacred page. It is the grand cardinal point on which all the doctrines of grace turn: and he that is unsound there, is unsound everywhere. The Godhead of Christ does not rest upon a few texts of Scripture, but it shines all through the Scripture; it is the light of the Scripture, and it is the life of the Scripture. Take away the Deity of Jesus out of the Scripture, and you would do the same thing spiritually as though you blotted the sun out of the sky naturally; the sacred page would be one black darkness. But the Person of Jesus is not Deity only. No man can see God and live; we could not bear to look upon pure Deity. And therefore the Son of God has taken into union with Himself our nature; He has "taken upon Him the seed of Abraham," that "holy thing" which was begotten by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and there united to the second Person of the glorious Trinity, that Godhead and manhood might form one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Now to the eye of faith there is the greatest beauty and glory in Christ's humanity. The enlightened soul views Deity shining through the manhood;

and when it sees Jesus “going about doing good,” when it hears the words that dropped from His gracious lips, when it views Him by the eye of faith, bleeding, suffering, agonising, and dying, it sees the Godhead in all these acts, upholding and shining through the manhood. And it is this union of the two natures in one glorious Person, that fills the heart that receives it in the faith of it and in the love of it with a measure of pure affection.

Here, then, the Church has a view of the glorious Person of Jesus; and she falls in love with Him. There is that in supernatural beauty which kindles spiritual affection, as there is that in natural beauty which kindles natural affection. When the quickened soul sees supernatural beauty, it immediately falls in love with it. The spiritual affections centre in spiritual beauty. And thus, when the redeemed and regenerated soul sees the glorious Person of Christ, God-man, Immanuel, God with us, and has a taste and sense of His love, the Blessed Spirit thereby kindles in it spiritual affection, and attracts it with these “cords of love and bands of a man.”

But was the Church at this moment in the sweet enjoyment of it? When she poured forth this passionate cry, was she being embraced in the arms of love? No, surely; for had she been there she would not have been saying, “Draw me.” She was at a distance; she was far off, and could not get nigh. She was sitting in the dark, and not walking in the light. She was mourning in solitary places, and not sitting with her Lord in heavenly places. But yet in the midst of all her darkness and desolation there was the secret kindling of spiritual affection in her heart, which vented itself in that cry, “Draw me.” The Blessed Spirit was secretly operating in her heart, and under His divine anointings there was a going forth of her spirit after the Redeemer. Had He not kindled the desire, nor prompted the speech, she could never have uttered the words, “Draw me.” We know, from painful experience, that there are times when we dare not ask Christ to draw us, for were our prayer answered (and the living soul shrinks from the hypocrisy of putting up a prayer which it does not wish to be answered) it

would draw us away from things that our carnal mind loves better. There are many of God's people, I believe, who are actually afraid of asking for great blessings, because they know that great blessings are attended with great trials, and their carnal minds are in that state of darkness, deadness, and rebellion, that they dare not put up the desire to be brought nearer to Jesus, because they feel there is no suitability betwixt them in their present state and Jesus, as their eyes see and consciences feel Him to be revealed in the Word. "But," say you, "is it possible for a child of God ever to be in that state, that he does not want Christ to draw him?" Where was the Church as described in Hosea 2:5, when she said, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink?" She at that time had known the Lord, and had been espoused to Him, for she says lower down, "I will go and return to my first Husband, for then was it better with me than now" (v. 7). So far from wanting to be drawn to the Lord, she was running away from Him after her lovers, and He had "to hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall, that she should not find her paths." And is not this often our case? There is something in Jesus so holy, and there is in us that which is so unholy, there is something in the Lord so spiritual, and in us so carnal, that so far from desiring to be brought nigh, because in being brought nigh we must be cut off from everything that our idolatrous hearts are set upon, we would rather the Lord would leave us to ourselves than draw us to Himself, since by so doing He would draw us out of that which our flesh so dearly loves. Now suppose a man is so situated that if he cleave close to the Lord he must make great sacrifices; say, for instance, that he is in trade, and if he is to follow very close after the Lord, and have a very tender conscience, and walk as the Lord would have him walk, it would be at a great temporal loss; why, there are times and seasons in that man's experience, though he is a child of God, when he dare not ask the Lord to draw him, because he fears, if the Lord were to do this, it would draw him out of a good business into the workhouse. And so a child of God may

sometimes be so entangled in some idolatrous affection, so overtaken with a besetting sin, or so fettered and bound with some darling lust that he dare not ask the Lord to draw him, because he knows that in being brought near to His sacred feet he must be brought out of that which his carnal mind cleaves to.

But the Church, at the time that she was now speaking, was not in that state. The Lord had shed abroad a sacred power over her; He had made her willing to take up the cross, and “follow Him in the regeneration;” He had given her the will, if it were so needful, to cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye; and He so attracted the eyes of her soul to Himself, that He drew her away from her lovers. She was not now in that backsliding state described, Jer. 2:25, “I have loved strangers, and after them will I go;” but the Lord had attracted and drawn forth all her affections to Himself, so that by the sweet operations of His grace in her soul, and by the blessed influences of His divine love shed abroad in her heart, she was willing to make any sacrifice, so that she might be permitted to come near unto Him, that He might “kiss her with the kisses of His mouth.” These two things are very compatible in the same individual. For the spiritual man is usually very much like the scales of a balance, sometimes the carnal mind sadly preponderating, and sometimes the spiritual mind blessedly preponderating; sometimes having an aversion to everything that is holy and spiritual, and sometimes feeling vital godliness to be the very element of his soul.

The Church, then, in her present state and stage of experience, has turned her back upon her lovers; has forsaken the “broken cisterns that can hold no water;” and is so overshadowed with divine operations, and so attracted by the Lord’s grace and love in her soul, that she says, “Draw me.” As though all her heart was concentrated in those words, as though her very soul was poured forth in them, as though they contained all the workings of her mind, and were the summing up of all her spiritual feelings; as though she would say—“All my desire is summed up in this, all

my wishes centre in this one point—'draw me;' I cannot live without Thee, and yet I cannot come nigh Thee; 'Thy love is better than wine,' and yet that love I cannot taste unless Thou art pleased to shed it abroad; I am a poor, vacillating, backsliding, inconsistent, idolatrous wretch, that cannot but sin against Thee, and shall ever sin against Thee, unless Thou art pleased to 'draw me' near to Thy sacred Person, that in coming near to Thee Thy name may be 'as ointment poured forth,' and thus that sweet savour may banish everything which is not consistent with Thy love." Though perhaps not very often, yet there are times and seasons when the child of God is here. Such or similar feelings come upon him at times when he is lying upon his bed; they steal over him at times when he is sitting in his solitary room, or visit him when he is engaged in his daily business; aye, it may be when he is passing along the crowded streets of this metropolis. "Draw me," in the words themselves, or in their substance and meaning, is sighed forth, as though he would complainingly tell the Lord that he was unable to get near, and yet unable to stay away; unable to realise that which his soul desired, and yet unable to live happily and contentedly without it.

II. "We will run after Thee." That is what the Bride well knew would be the sure consequence of her prayer being heard and answered.

There is no free will here; nothing of the boasted free agency of man—"I will do this, and I will do that." But it is—"Draw me" first, put forth Thy divine hand, shed abroad Thy blessed operations, breathe Thy heavenly power into my soul, and then "we will run after Thee." Now this is just the state in which the child of God is from time to time. He is not the self-righteous Arminian, who can read, hear and pray, believe, hope and love, as when and how he will: nor is he the presumptuous Antinomian, who, resting in the doctrine of creature helplessness, never wishes to have any obedience wrought in him, but is satisfied with doing nothing whereby God may be glorified, or His people benefited. But he is in this state—unable to do anything, and yet willing to do everything if

the Lord would but enable him: unable to move a single step in the way, and yet so dissatisfied with his own slothfulness and inability, that he wishes nothing so much as that the Lord would “work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure,” and make him all that He would have him to be.

“We will run after Thee.” What does this imply? Why, it implies that there is a “following on to know the Lord.” The Church does not say, “Draw me, we will come to Thee,” but “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” And this rather seems to point to an experience that I dare say some of you are acquainted with. Which is this—that when the Lord is pleased to draw the soul by some sweet attraction, He often (so to speak) retires and recedes out of sight, that He may lead us further on, and draw us more away from sense, sight, and reason, an more out of ourselves. We find this set forth in the third chapter, first and second verses, where the Church says—“By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the broadways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not.” Here is the Bride seeking Jesus, and finding Him not; He receding out of sight, retiring (so to speak) away from her anxious pursuit. Now this is what many of the children of God know in soul experience, that the Lord seems to recede from them; and the nearer they try to get to Him, the farther they find themselves from Him, and the more unable they seem to find “Him whom their soul loveth.” The Bride then, being conscious of this, says, “We will run after Thee;” however long be the way, however dangerous be the road, whatever stumbling-blocks lie in the path, whatever difficulties, anxieties, and perplexities may intervene between me and Thee, only “draw me,” only put forth Thy mighty power in bringing me nearer to Thyself with the cords of love, and “we will run after Thee;” the way will not be too long, and the path will not be too narrow; with the blessed putting forth of Thy power in the soul, “we will run after Thee,” though it be to the very ends of the earth.

But the soul, in thus running after Jesus, has some anxiously-desired objects to attain. What are these objects?

1. Why, when she is guilty, and sin lies as a heavy burden upon her conscience, she runs after Him that she may obtain a sight of that blood of sprinkling “which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Some people think that if they once have received pardon, they need have no renewal of it as long as they live. Hart was not of that opinion when he wrote,

“Begging mercy every hour.”

He wanted pardon to be continually applied to his soul; as fresh guilt arose, he wanted fresh mercy to be manifested. And I believe such is the experience of every soul that knows anything of the Lord. It cannot be satisfied with having received mercy once; it must have mercy again and again; and the more mercy it tastes, the more it will be seeking fresh and fresh manifestations of it.

2. But to obtain a sense of mercy was not the only object that the Bride sought to obtain in running this heavenly race. She sought also to “attain to righteousness” (Rom. 9:30). She was “black,” and therefore needed that “righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe;” and she knew that she must run after Jesus, and get near to Him, that she might be clothed with this blessed garment of imputed righteousness.

3. She wanted also strength. She had no strength to resist sin, no strength to mortify the members which are upon the earth, and “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;” she wanted power to be delivered from the spirit of the world, to put off the old man and to put on the new, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; and therefore she would “run after Him,” that she might receive strength out of His fulness.

4. But she would “run after Him,” not merely to receive pardon, righteousness, and strength, but above all that she might be favoured with some sweet visitations of His gracious presence. For that is what the Lord’s people chiefly want to feel. If they could have pardon and righteousness and strength without Christ’s pres-

ence, it would not be true pardon, true righteousness, nor true strength. It is the manifestation of these things as accompanied by the presence of Christ, it is the receiving of them from His own hands, it is the hearing of them from His own gracious lips, it is the sweet enjoyment of them by His own positive and inward testimony, that makes pardon to be pardon, righteousness to be righteousness, and strength to be strength. They are otherwise but so many doctrines that stand in the letter of the word, but are not blessed realities received into the heart and conscience from the lips and mouth of Jesus; and therefore she would “run after Him,” that she might taste His presence, as the grand crowning blessing, and enjoy the Giver as well as His gifts.

5. And this leads us to observe that she would also “run after Him” that she might enjoy communion with Him. His gifts, His graces, even His very presence would not satisfy her, unless there were something mutual, some heavenly fellowship and divine intercourse, some exchange of loves. Love is not satisfied with mere presence. Some intercommunion is needed, some exchange of the pure affections of the heart, some melting into and union with the same spirit. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” “And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3)

6. And she besought Him to “draw her” that she might also “run after Him” in a way of practical obedience. Her desire was to fulfil His precepts, and to tread in His footsteps; that His holy image might be stamped upon her, and that she might walk in conformity to the example which He has left that we should follow His steps. But she had no power to obey; she could not perform one precept, she could not take up one cross, she could not lift her soul up out of that state of helplessness in which she was now lying, nor could she run a single step forward in the path of simple and spiritual obedience, unless He was pleased to “draw her” that she might “run after Him,” and so walk in the strait and narrow path that He walked in before her. To obey in the letter is easy,

but obedience in the letter is like everything else in the letter—it is “of the earth, earthy;” it is sensual and natural; it cannot therefore profit the soul. But what the soul that is really taught of God desires, is to walk in the path of experimental obedience, that its motives may be spiritual and its practice spiritual; its words spiritual and its works spiritual; and that the mind and will of God may be so revealed in the soul that its way and walk may be experimental and spiritual from first to last. It may satisfy the blind Pharisee to tread a mill-horse round of legal duties; it may content the dead Calvinist to walk a similar round of mere doctrines; but the living soul must have doctrine, promise, precept—in a word, everything that it calls or counts religion, to be spiritual and experimental from first to last. Nor can such a one realise one doctrine which is not brought by the blessed Spirit into his heart; nor can he enjoy one promise which is not made sweet to his soul by an internal application of it by the Spirit; nor can he take a single step in the path of practical, spiritual obedience, unless the Spirit of God “work in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

There was, then, raised up in the heart of the Bride this simple, this single, this sincere desire to follow Jesus “whithersoever He goeth;” and that is the mark of a true follower of the Lamb. Through the flood, through the fire, through the wilderness, through the darkness, through temptation, through tribulation, through conflict, through exercises—whithersoever the Lamb leads, His people follow. He is their Head, He is their Guide, He is their Lord, He is their Husband, He is their King; and Him they follow, Him they run after, and in His footsteps they desire to walk. Thus the Bride, under the blessed operations of the Holy Ghost, says, “Draw me, we will run after Thee.”

Had she not been under the blessed operations of the Spirit, this would have been in her the language of presumption. Had she said boldly that she would “run after Him,” had she not preceded that by the sweet supplication—“Draw me,” it would have been in her but the expression of vain confidence. It would have resembled

his speech, who said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," but whose fleshly zeal the Lord soon suppressed, when He told him that "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Lu. 9:57, 58). But her whole soul being on fire, her affections drawn forth, and her heart sweetly touched by the Spirit of God, she was able to run in the path which He should point out, however distressing or however dark that path might be to nature, sense, reason, flesh and blood.

This, then, implies a willingness to make sacrifices; for he that will follow Jesus must take up his cross and deny himself, or he cannot be His disciple (Lu. 14:27). It implies a resolution to follow the Lord, whatsoever come to pass; it carries with it the solemn determination of the soul, when under these sweet operations, to do the Lord's bidding, and, in whatever path He may precede, in that implicitly and submissively to follow. Such a resolution, then, is not a thing that a man may take up and lay down just as he pleases; it is not a mere doctrine in God's Word, which one may see there, and, as such, may approve of as true. But it is having a certain experience produced in the heart; it is being brought by the Holy Ghost Himself into a certain state and stage of the divine life; and it is having these things wrought with that efficacious power in the soul, of which we read (Ps. 110:3), "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

This, as it appears to me, was the state and stage of the Bride in soul experience, when she poured forth these words so sweetly expressive of the warm desires of her heart.

How many of us can take these words now into our lips, or have ever been able at any one time of our life to use such an expression? Which of us has ever been so blessedly lifted up into the knowledge of Christ and of His glorious Person, and has had such a sight of Him by living faith, that these words would sum up in them the whole desire of the heart, "Draw me?"—away from relations, away from friends, away from what flesh loves and clings to

most closely, away from everything that my carnal heart is bound up in and fettered down by. Which of us has ever been made willing to give up and forsake all, and follow Jesus simply and singly in the path that He shall point out?—and all from spiritual love to His Person, all from a principle of pure affection; not merely from a desire to get to heaven at the last, not influenced by a self-righteous principle, as if by these things we shall merit salvation, but from a simple, sincere, single breathing forth of love and affection to Jesus, as being altogether suitable, and “altogether lovely.”

Surely, then, there must have been some love sips before the soul could really say, “Draw me?” There must have been some sight and sense of the preciousness and loveliness of Jesus, before ever it could cry, “Draw me,” from the depth of a sincere heart. For the sincere soul is afraid to utter a petition it does not feel; it fears to approach the holy Jehovah, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and insult Him with mock petitions and words that it does not feel. He, therefore, that can enter into the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of this—”Draw me,” must have had something let down into his soul from Jesus previously, which has kindled affection, and drawn forth the sincere and fervent spiritual desires of the heart. When you lie, perhaps, upon your bed, and in an agony of intercession are crying, “Draw me,” there must be that in your soul which longs after a manifestation of the love and presence of Christ. When, as you are engaged in your various occupations, there is a secret putting up of a cry in your souls, “Draw me,” there must be in you some new principle, there must exist a spiritual nature within, which can really desire such a thing as to be drawn. It is not in some of you the mere uttering of words without any feeling, but it is the solemn intercourse of a living soul with a heart-searching God; it is some solemn transaction between God and conscience, when no eye is present to see, nor ear open to hear. And I believe that no man can really cry from the very depth of his soul, “Draw me,” and pour this forth time after time in fervent intercession to the Lord, who has not had a glimpse by faith of the glorious Per-

son of Christ—who has not realised some measure of Jesus' grace, love, and blood. I grant it may have been a small measure, and that dim and transient; but there must have been some discovery of Jesus, as suited to his helpless and hopeless condition. And it is the mysterious working together of his misery and Jesus' mercy, of his weakness and Jesus' strength, of his guilt and Jesus' blood, of his death and darkness and Jesus' life and light, of his baseness and blackness and Jesus' everlasting righteousness—it is a living sight and sense of these two opposites, and a meeting together of them in the same bosom, that makes him cry, "Draw me."

The words then imply a felt and spiritual knowledge that there is everything in the creature which is vile and filthy, and everything in the Saviour which is beautiful and lovely; that everything in man is weakness and helplessness, and everything in the Lord is suitable to such an emptied, exercised, and poverty-stricken soul. No Arminian and no Antinomian could use these words with sincerity; for the Arminian could not say, "Draw me," when he could run of himself; and the Antinomian could not say, "We will run after Thee," when he is not willing to move a single step forward in practical obedience. None but a living soul can really use both clauses in sincerity and godly simplicity. For such only is so sensible of his own helplessness as to feel his need to be drawn, such only has had a sight of Jesus' beauty, which kindles the desire to be drawn, such only is willing to walk in the path of self-denying obedience, and "mortify the deeds of the body."

If ever then the Lord has raised up this cry in our hearts, there must be divine life there; there must be spiritual feeling, there must be faith, there must be hope, there must be love, there must be the Holy Ghost there. I do not say—if ever we have used the words; but I say—if ever we have had the feelings that I have been describing. And if you have these feelings, and are able in secret to vent them before the Lord, I want to know (and I appeal to the conscience of those who are exercised with distressing doubts and fears whether the Lord has ever been gracious to them), where did

these things come from? Did they come from the devil? Would he put it in the heart to cry, "Draw me?" Did they come from the flesh? Has the flesh any love to God? Is not "the carnal mind enmity against God?" Then whence did it come? Why, from "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." They came from Him as a good and perfect gift, as a blessed communication of divine life, as a pledge of eternal happiness, as a drop from that blessed fountain at which the redeemed will through all eternity slake their happy souls.

Have you then—can you, join with the Bride, and say, "Draw me? at whatever risk, whatever sacrifice; I cannot live without Thee, I cannot die without Thee; whatever it costs, 'draw me,' that I may 'run after Thee,' and receive Thee into my heart as my Lord and my God." If ever that desire has been kindled, and that prayer raised up in your soul, "Draw me, we will run after Thee," it must have been the work of the Holy Ghost in your hearts, to raise up those feelings, and to give you that living faith in the Son of God. And "he that believeth shall be saved." Whatever doubts, whatever fears, whatever temptations, whatever exercises beset the path, "he that believeth shall be saved." He that has had given him one grain of spiritual faith in Christ's glorious Person, who has had one sight of His atoning blood, one sip of divine love shed abroad in his heart, is sure to go to glory; he is saved with an everlasting salvation in his covenant Head. The Lord that has kindled these strong desires after Himself in his soul, will surely fulfil them. As we find He did in the case of the Bride! He said to her after a little time, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" (2:11, 12).

Some of you perhaps may be surprised to see me here this evening. As I had to pass through Town, I felt an inclination to see my friends at Zoar, and speak to them, though it were but once, in the name of the Lord. I assure you, my friends, that it has been

a disappointment to me that I am not able to come among you as usual this year; and nothing but the state of my health would have prevented me. Could I have come in a quiet way, without that anxiety, that excitement, that labour, which always accompanies my preaching here, I would have come amongst you as heretofore; but my constitution is not able to stand the great mental and bodily exertion that always falls upon me in coming to preach in London; and for that reason, and for no other, I have been obliged for this year to decline my annual visit. But I would not pass through Town without standing up here this evening to show that I bear you in my heart, and that I would willingly, had circumstances permitted, come as usual, and spoken to you in the name of the Lord.

35 THE DAY IN WHICH A MAN LOOKS TO HIS MAKER

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, , at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

October 16th, 1842

"At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."

Isaiah 17:7

We are very much, I think, in the dark as to the historical interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament. We are so little acquainted with the various circumstances of the different times and periods, that there must needs be many obscurities connected with the historical interpretation. But I know not whether we are very great losers on this account. There is another interpretation about which we are not so much in the dark, one which is far more suitable to our case as individuals, and, when made known by the Spirit, far more sweet and profitable; I mean the experimental vein that runs through these prophecies.

I shall not attempt, therefore, to explain this morning the historical meaning of this text, though no doubt it has one, but con-

fine myself almost entirely to its spiritual interpretation.

“At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.”

We find mention made in the text of a certain “day.” This expression occurs very frequently in Isaiah, and the other prophets of the Old Testament. For instance, in Isa. 26:1, we read, “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” So again, 27:1, “In that day the Lord, with His sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent,” &c. The meaning of this “day,” thus emphatically spoken of, we must gather generally from the context. Guided by this clue, we shall sometimes find it to point out a season of great trial, and sometimes one of great joy. It is not a literal day of twenty-four hours, but a certain season, which, whether of joy or trouble, takes place in the hearts of God’s people. Which of these days it is generally pretty clear from the context, and therefore we will, with God’s blessing, look back a little at the verses immediately preceding the text, in order to discover whether the day of trouble or the day of joy be intended in the passage before us. We will commence with verse 4 of this chapter. “And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.” The day spoken of in the text is when “the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.” It cannot therefore be the same day of which we read, Isa. 12:1, where the Church, blessed with a sense of the pardon of her sins, says, “O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine

anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.” But it points to a season of trouble, when the Church is brought down and laid low. The work, then, upon her soul which is carried on in this season is pointed out in the words, “The glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.”

What is this glory of Jacob? It is not the real glory of Jacob, which consisted in their peculiar relationship to God, which glory could not diminish nor fade; but it is anything in which the people of God (who are pointed out by the word “Jacob”) may glory naturally—anything in which they may take an idolatrous pleasure, or boast of after the flesh. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.” Thus some boast in riches, some in strength, some in learning, some in talents; all of us, more or less, have, or think we have, something in which to glory—to boast of—to take pride in. But in the case of the elect family of God, a day comes when this “glory is made thin.”

1. The Lord here seems to have taken the figure of a person in a consumption or some such wasting disease, all whose strength and comeliness pine away and decline, and all whose flesh gradually falls away from his bones. “In that day,” then, when God puts his hand upon him, when He touches his conscience with His finger, when He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, when He sets his secret sins before his face, when He gives him a display of His majesty and holiness, when He brings him to book, and holds a solemn court of judgment in his conscience—“in that day the glory of Jacob is made thin, and the fatness of his flesh waxes lean.” If he could take pleasure in his property, when he is troubled about his soul, the glory of it waxes thin. If he could rejoice in his strong health and vigorous body, when the pangs of guilt lay hold of him, he can take no pleasure in them. If he could boast of his talents and ability, or of his acquired learning, when the Lord takes him in hand and brings conviction of sin into his soul, the glory of them all waxes thin. Or if pride in

him runs in a different channel, and cradled in the religion of the day, he has amassed a heap of righteousness, it is with it in that day as the Lord describes (Haggai 1:9): “Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it.” Or if more subtilly deceived, he glories in the form of godliness without the power; if he is stiffened and buckramed up with a natural knowledge of the doctrines of grace, without a true experience of their savour, “in that day” the glory of all his long profession wastes away. If he prided himself upon his discernment in divine things, in the soundness of his judgment, strength of his memory, depth of his scriptural knowledge, or acuteness in detecting error, his glory in them becomes weakened and worn away. So that, let him look on every side, whatever he gloried in is become wan, whatever he has taken pleasure in wastes away from him, like a man’s flesh off his bones in a consumption, and he is unable to gain either satisfaction or pleasure from that in which he once boasted.

2. But we read that not only shall “the glory of Jacob be made thin,” but that “the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.” The Scriptures often use the figure of fatness to imply a state without any spiritual trouble. “Their eyes stand out with fatness.” “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deut. 32:15). “I will destroy the fat and the strong” (Ezek. 34:16). Fatness implies the absence of all disease—of all hard labour—of all anxiety and care; and the presence of all that the flesh lusteth after. Now when the Lord takes a man in hand, when He begins to work on his conscience, and brings eternal realities with weight and power into his soul, this “fatness waxes lean.” As we read in Job 32:21, “His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out.” The disease of sin, the labour to make his calling and election sure, and his anxiety lest he miscarry eternally, all conspire to wear his fatness away.

3. But the Holy Ghost employs another figure to throw a light on what takes place in “that day.” “And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm;

and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.” This verse in its literal meaning seems to point out some desolation to take place which should reduce the number of the people. But viewed spiritually, it appears to refer to a desolation of the individual, for of an individual the text speaks—”In that day shall a man look to his Maker,” &c. Under this figure, then, the soul is compared to a field out of which the corn had been reaped. There was once a flourishing crop; the ears stood thick upon the ground; but the harvest-man has been there, and reaped the ears with his arm. So spiritually, in this “valley of Rephaim” (which appears to have been famed for its luxuriant crops) there has grown up an abundant crop of fleshly religion, self-righteousness, and self-esteem; but “in that day,” the harvest-man comes with his sickle and cuts down the crop.

4. And yet neither literally nor spiritually should the desolation be full or final. “Gleaning grapes” (that is, the grapes which the gleaner came in search of after the vintage was over, Deut. 24:21) “should be left in it;” a remnant according to the election of grace should remain; and yet so scanty in number that they should be “as the shaking of an olive-tree” (that is, after it had been shaken for its crop), “two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof.” And so spiritually, amidst all this shaking of the soul there should be left some few good things towards the Lord God of Israel in the top of the uppermost boughs—the very last place where we should look for them; as, for instance, some reverence and godly fear, some tenderness of conscience, something of the Lord’s own implantation in the soul, so that it is not utterly destitute, like the barren fig-tree, of which it was said, “Cut it down—why cumbereth it the ground?”

These things must be taken into consideration in order to enter into the spiritual meaning of the text. “At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.”

I. The fruit, then, and effect of this work upon the soul—of this consumption, of this reaping, of this shaking, is that “in that day,” or season of deep necessity, “a man looks to his Maker.”

1. The word “Maker” may here mean his Maker naturally—that divine Being who formed him in the womb, and gave him a natural existence. He never looked to the God who made him before; he had no spiritual knowledge of Him; the Lord had not made Himself experimentally known to him. But now, “in that day when the glory of Jacob is made thin, and the fatness of his flesh is waxed lean,” when all the crop of natural religion is taken away by the harvest-man, he “looks to his Maker”—that is, he is brought to see and know that there is a God that has created him to live for ever, and given him a soul that can never die. Under this conviction he experiences such feelings as he never knew before; and he is thus made to see that He who has brought him into existence, and preserved him to the present moment, has been mocked and insulted by him during the greater part of his life, and that he has lived without God and without hope in the world. He is brought too to see something of the longsuffering of the Lord in not having cut him down and sent him to a richly-deserved hell.

2. But the words, “his Maker,” seem to admit of a further signification. God is not only our Maker naturally, but so far as we are the supernatural work of His hand, He is our Maker spiritually. The new man of grace is therefore called “a creature,” or “creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), and said to be “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

When, then, a man is passing through this work, when judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, he “looks to his Maker” in a spiritual sense, as to “a faithful Creator” (1 Pe. 4:19). He feels if he is to be anything, to have anything, to know anything aright, God must work in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. He is brought to see that all his religion from first to last must spring from God’s grace in his soul. If he is to possess a grain of faith, it must be wrought in his heart by God. If there

is a spark of living hope to keep him from despair, it must be communicated to his soul by the Divine hand. If he has any love for the Lord or for His people, it must be wrought in him. But until his glory was made thin, and the fatness of his flesh waxed lean, he never really looked to his Maker in that way. He took his religion for granted; held it upon trust; received it from the letter of the Word; esteemed himself a Christian and passed as such, without having ever been instructed by God Himself, without having had his religion wrought in the soul by a supernatural power; without having ever been convinced and pierced through and through by a sense of his guilt before God; without any deep-rooted conviction that he was utterly unable to produce one spiritual thought in his own soul. But when the glory of Jacob waxes thin; when he looks upon his limbs, and finds them emaciated—then he is brought from sheer destitution, from the real necessity of the case, from experimental feelings, not from mere doctrinal knowledge, to look upwards to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And he is taught as a personal thing, an individual reality, to wait upon the Lord who hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and to look for Him (Isa. 8:17).

Now a man may go to the summit of doctrine and of the letter of experience in his judgment, and to the greatest self-denial and consistency in practice, and yet never have been brought thus to look to his Maker. He may have discernment to see who is right and who is wrong, and yet never once have been brought to spread himself out as a guilty sinner before the Lord, or fall down before Him as a ruined wretch. And why so easily and so fatally deceived, but because “the glory of Jacob has not been made thin, nor the fatness of his flesh waxed lean?” The harvest-man has not been and reaped the crop of his natural religion; the gleaner has not swept away the grapes; nor the rod of the olive-gatherer beaten down the olives (Deut. 24:20). But in that day when the Lord takes a man in hand, he will “look to his Maker,” and not all the powers of hell, not all the workings of unbelief, not all the oppo-

sition of the world, not all the fears that his heart may be exercised with—none of these, though all conspire, no, not the flattery of false friends, nor the persecutions of open enemies, will be able to prevent this tried and tempted man from “looking to his Maker.”

If we revert for a few moments to the figure which I spoke of as contained in the fourth verse of this chapter, it seems to throw a light on the way in which these internal exercises sometimes come on. We do not there read of a sudden work, as though there were no other way, but we find the figure of a consumption made use of, that begins slowly and imperceptibly, yet gradually wastes away the flesh, and terminates in death. So spiritually; these internal exercises creep upon some by degrees. Some conviction that they are not right; some secret arrow lodged in the conscience, though they can scarcely tell whence it came; some alarm and terror commencing perhaps almost imperceptibly yet making gradual progress, and slowly wasting all their strength, wisdom, and righteousness away, until it issues in a death to all legal hope. I believe there are many in this state who cannot clearly and precisely trace out how this work began in their souls, and yet when we look at the fruit and result, we cannot doubt the result of the work. We see them brought down into a state of helplessness and condemnation, cut off from all confidence in the flesh, and in sincerity and godly fear looking wholly and solely to their Maker.

II. But we read also that “in that day a man shall not only look to his Maker, but also that his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.”

The Lord Jesus is pointed out in the words, “the Holy One of Israel.” It is His peculiar title, and as such is often connected with His other name of “Redeemer.” “Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 43:14), and with His title of “Saviour”—“I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour” (Isa. 43:3). Even devils acknowledged Him as “the Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34). He is “the Holy One of Israel” as God and man, being holy in underived Deity, and holy in sinless hu-

manity; and He is “the Holy One of Israel” as God-man, the object of Israel’s worship and love.

But the text shows that, till a man has experienced more or less of this wasting and consuming work in his soul, he never “has respect to the Holy One of Israel.” Jesus is to him as a root out of dry ground; He has no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty that he should desire Him. Go where you will, you will find in this day many bright professors who talk much about Christ. His name is continually in their lips, but their heart is far from Him. They think they know Him, but they do not. They know Him doctrinally, after the flesh, in the letter, not in the manifestation of Himself to their souls. And depend upon it, a man neither will, nor can know anything experimentally of “the Holy One of Israel,” until he is brought into circumstances of deep poverty and thorough destitution so as absolutely to need Him. “In that day” then, when the flesh is wasted from his bones, when he looks to his Maker, and sees little but wrath in prospect, and finds no strength nor help in self, “his eyes,” under the Spirit’s heavenly teaching, begin to have “respect to the Holy One of Israel.” The Spirit of God, whose covenant office it is to take of the things of Jesus and show them to the soul, will often in that day shed a sweet, soft, and yet powerful light on the things spoken of Jesus in the Word. He bears testimony to His blood as cleansing from all sin; to His righteousness as a justifying obedience; to His suitability to all a sinner’s wants; to His condescension towards the vilest and worst; to the dignity of His glorious Person, and to the efficacy of His finished work. These things, as the Spirit begins to make them known to the soul, and brings a savour and taste of them into the heart, are looked upon with new eyes, heard with new ears, and received with new feelings. The man begins now to look to the Holy One of Israel as he never looked before. When he was “rich and increased with goods,” he lacked the spiritual “eye-salve,” whereby alone he could see Him. But when guilt is brought home to his conscience in order that Christ’s blood may cleanse him, when he is made

naked that Christ's righteousness may be his justifying robe, when he is stripped of all creature strength that the Saviour's strength may be made perfect in his weakness, robbed of his wisdom that Christ may be "of God made to him wisdom," as well as "sanctification and redemption;" then the Spirit begins to cast a sweet light into his heart, and to shed a savour of Jesus' name into his soul. He anoints his eyes to see, He opens his ears to hear, and touches his heart to feel. And now "his eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel." The expression means that his eyes shall look towards this Holy One, as a dependent on His bounty and favour, as we read Ps. 123:2, "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." And as this humble dependent looks toward and upon this holy and only Mediator, his faith brings in a sweetness such as he never felt before, hope springs up in the heart, the fears which disturbed him begin to give way, he receives strength to go forward, and in going forward he finds access to the presence of Jehovah. "In that day," then, the man who looks to his Maker, and whose eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel, receives such a sense, such a taste, such a sight, such a knowledge of the Person, blood, work, grace, and righteousness of Jesus as he never had before the Lord took him in hand, and made "the fatness of his flesh wax lean."

In the very name, "the Holy One of Israel," there is something the sweetness of which melts his heart. For what is he in himself as a fallen child of Adam? A filthy, defiled, polluted wretch, unfit for the presence of God. And what can fit such an unclean, unworthy, deformed sinner for the eternal presence and enjoyment of the Triune Jehovah but such a Saviour as the Holy One of Israel, whose blood, as a holy fountain, cleanseth from all sin? The soul that stands in Him stands complete, without spot or blemish. And must not his heart leap and dance when with a measure of faith he is able to lay hold of this Holy One of Israel? Must it not needs bring relief to the wretch who feels himself nothing but a mass of filth and guilt in the eyes of a just God, to receive the Holy One of Israel with something of sweetness and power into his soul? It is the

spiritual belief in, and inward reception of this Holy Mediator, that produces communion with all the three Persons in the Godhead. But this living faith in and spiritual reception of the only Mediator between God and man cannot exist until a man is brought into circumstances in which he needs the Holy One of Israel. Until he is emptied and stripped of all creature strength he cannot truly understand how, nor really desire that the strength of Christ may be made perfect in his weakness. So with Christ's wisdom, so with His righteousness, so with His blood, so with His love, so with His gracious presence—all are mere words, loose and floating ideas, dim, dreary conceptions, until poverty and need lie hard upon the soul, and the blessed Spirit makes known "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as so many experimental realities. It is this gracious discovery which endears to him the Holy One of Israel. And so I might trace it all through, and point out how in this man's experience there was no divine faith, no going out of hope, no flowing of affection toward the Holy One of Israel, till "that day," when he had no one else to look to, no hope in the creature; till all his righteousness failed him, and he felt that he must be saved by free grace, or eternally perish.

The verse immediately following the text is so closely connected with it, and so sweetly shows the fruits and effects of this work upon the soul, that I shall just drop a few remarks upon it before I draw to a conclusion. "And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images."

1. We have here, as I have just hinted, some of the effects spoken of that follow a man's "having respect to the Holy One of Israel." "He shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands." "The altars" here spoken of point to a man's natural religion, which is the work of his hands, erected by creature wisdom and fleshly piety,—not God's workmanship, but manufactured by human industry. He was looking to these altars, the work of his own hands, on which he was daily offering sacrifice, or burning incense. God

allowed the children of Israel but one "altar of burnt offering," which was anointed with the holy oil, and was "an altar most holy" (Exod. 40:10), and typical of Jesus, the only true altar (Heb. 13:10), and the only true sacrifice. All the heathen altars were to be utterly destroyed (Exod. 34:13). But fleshly religion is ever building altars, and "looking to them" as propitiating the favour of God, until that consuming and wasting work takes place of which I have spoken. "In that day a man has respect to the Holy One of Israel." Then he can no longer look to the altars, the works of his hands. He can no longer look to those offerings which once he could with pleasure and satisfaction bring before God. His righteousness is become filthy rags, and his prayers stink in his nostrils, his alms-deeds are polluted, and he can no longer thus have confidence in the flesh.

2. "Neither can he have respect to that which his fingers have made." With whatever skill his fingers may have moulded idols, built castles, hewed out cisterns, laid out earthly Edens, painted "pleasant pictures," this work upon his soul brings him from having any respect to them. His own fingers pollute all they touch and render them unclean, so that he can in that day no longer look on them with delight or pleasure.

3. "Nor can he look to the groves," those dark scenes of heathen pollution. "The groves," in ancient times, were the scenes of those pollutions which accompanied the worship of Baal, and of those bloody sacrifices in which parents offered their children to Moloch. God commanded the children of Israel to cut them down and burn them with fire (Deut. 7:5; 12:3). Thus spiritually, "the groves" seem to point to the dark haunts of indulged sin, which always accompany the idolatrous worship of self. Sin and self-righteousness are inseparable companions. But in that day when the altars of self-righteousness are overthrown, and "the eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel," a man cannot look to these groves with delight, nor practise those secret deeds of iniquity in which he could willingly indulge while he had a name to live but was dead.

4. Neither can he look to "the images," for he must have God

Himself. The natural representations of God, the self-imagined shape and form of godliness, the vain and delusive superstitions which the carnal mind bodies forth, the imitations of grace, faith, and godliness—all these “images” which thousands worship, “in that day” a man no more looks to. He can no longer be satisfied with the image; he must have the reality, and that experimentally felt in his own soul.

If this be a correct interpretation of the text and context, we see how it gives a man no reasonable ground to believe he knows anything savingly in his soul, who has not experienced this work upon his heart; who has not seen, more or less, all his creature religion cut down to the very stump; who has not felt all religion taken away except that which stands in the sovereign power and operation of God in the soul, an operation which leaves nature not a single thing of which it can boast; which takes away all creature hope, and does not even leave it a sherd to take water from the pit. Do not the words decisively show that until a man is brought to have “his glory made thin, and the fatness of his flesh to wax lean,” he has never yet looked to his Maker, nor his eyes had respect to the Holy One of Israel, that he has never turned his back upon the altars of creature religion, nor cast his idols to the moles and to the bats?

The grand question to be settled is whether our religion tallies and coincides with this divine pattern. This cannot be always measured by the depth and clearness of the experience. A man may experimentally know what I have been attempting to describe, and yet his experience shall seem so confused, he shall be so little able to trace out to his own satisfaction how this work commenced and was carried on, with its present fruits and results; it may have been so much by fits and starts, and there may have been so much carnality and sin, pride and hypocrisy mingled with it all, that he shall be much puzzled to decide that he has really experienced it. And yet when we come to examine the fruits and effects of this experience which so puzzled and perplexed him, we shall see in

him a sincerity, a humility, a breathing after communion with God, a crying out for salvation, a sight and sense of his own misery and wretchedness, and, accompanying these things, a faith in, and a hanging upon, the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, which we shall in vain look for among many who speak boldly and confidently of their standing and security. For after all, the point we must come to is this—what are the effects? If we say we are God's people, and profess to believe the doctrines of grace, our profession is idle and vain unless we have come unto the knowledge of truth in a right way; and if so, there will be certain marks of this heavenly teaching. Are these marks to be found in us? Has our glory been made thin? Has the fatness of our flesh waxed lean? Has judgment been carried on in the secret court of conscience? And has the effect been to make us look to our Maker, and cry to Him with sighs and tears, convinced that nothing but His almighty hand can deliver us from the lowest hell? And have we been brought "to have respect to the Holy One of Israel?" To feel there is in Jesus what we never saw before, and to discover in Him a beauty, glory, and preciousness which we never knew before? The way in which these things were made known may at times not seem to be very clear; but was there not a time when you began to feel that much, if not most, of your knowledge was mere head knowledge? your profession mere pretension before men? When thus stripped and wounded you began to seek the Lord as you never sought Him before; did not Jesus begin to show Himself to you as He never did before? Was there not a going out of hope, and a stream of spiritual affection toward Him? And what has been the effect of falling out of conceit with self, and falling in love with Him? Has it not been to forsake the altars you have made; to turn your back upon creature religion; to give up those things God hates; to have no respect to that which your fingers have made; to abandon the dark groves, and all the images you worshipped, that there may be allowedly none but the Lord Jesus?

Here, then, is the pattern to which our religion must be con-

formable, if we are to see God in glory. If a man cannot lay his religion down side by side with this, what evidence has he that God has been at work in his soul? Wherever the Spirit of God has been at work, there will be more or less conformity to the pattern which God has traced out in the Scriptures. If a man's religion is not conformed to this, he will find it will let him down one day to the lowest hell. The people of God cannot take their religion upon credit; they cannot be satisfied with the endorsement of this or that good man. They must have their religion wrought by God Himself. They are often exercised as to whence their religion came. Do you not find it so, and that your religion costs you many exercises? If, for instance, you are cast down, you are exercised whether it springs from godly sorrow for sin. If you are comforted, you cannot take the comfort for granted; you must have it weighed up in the gospel balance. If you meet with providential deliverances, you cannot take them as so many certain evidences that all is right with your soul. So that every step you take you have to examine, and weigh it whether it be of God. The dead professors, the hypocrites in Zion, never have their religion tried and weighed up in this way. They know nothing of these inward exercises. They take things for granted; they nestle under some good man's wing, or get their religion endorsed by some minister, and are satisfied. But the people of God must have testimonies from the Lord Himself; and they will often be sharply exercised whether they have that work in their souls which will stand in the trying hour. And if in answer to their cries the Lord is pleased to shine into their souls, and raise up clear tokens that it is, it fills their hearts with gratitude, sinks the things of time and sense, and lifts up their affections to that blessed fountain whence these testimonies came down. Thus those very things which seem against them are for them, and they derive their sweetest consolations out of their heaviest afflictions. Their trying path they would not change with all its bitter things for the smooth, flowery path in which they see thousands walk, knowing that a religion without trials and temptations will only

lead the soul down into a never-ending hell. Thus at times they feel good can spring out of their exercises, and would rather be all their days a tempted, tried people, and bear those things which God inflicts, than walk in a path which seemeth right in the eyes of a man, and at the end find eternal destruction. They would rather have those chastisements which prove they are children and not bastards, than walk in a flesh-pleasing way of which the end is eternal damnation.

36 THE LIVING MAN'S COMPLAINT

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, , at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester.

October 16th, 1842

"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

Lamentations 3:39-41

In all this congregation there is perhaps not a single individual who is not possessed of some kind of religion, and who has not some hope that that religion will take him safe to heaven. But were we to examine into the foundation of this religion, were we to dig deep in order to see the pillars on which it stands, it is to be feared that the hope of very few would be found to rest on a solid basis.

Most persons take their religion upon trust, without any scrutiny or examination. Men do not act thus in natural things; they do not take things upon trust in the affairs of time and sense. Knowing the wide and almost universal prevalence of fraud and deception, most persons examine with great minuteness whatever they purchase; and generally speaking, in proportion to the value of the article will it be more minutely scrutinized, and the greater pains be taken to detect the real from the counterfeit. Yet in the case of religion, that important thing on which eternity depends, men will

take it up without examination as to its foundation in their own souls, and pass through life well satisfied that they are bound for heaven, without one heart-searching cry to God whether it be His work in their hearts or not.

If then the value set upon a thing is exhibited by the scrutiny exercised upon it, religion, taking the great majority of cases, would appear to have no value at all. It is taken up at random by hundreds, without any personal knowledge of what vital godliness is, and therefore no inquiry is ever made in the soul, whether it be of that kind which will stand in the trying hour.

Yet God in His Word has not left us altogether destitute of marks whereby the state of the soul may be examined and scrutinized; but He has in His blessed Scriptures laid down certain unerring tests, the possession or non-possession of which determines the possession or non-possession of vital godliness. Nor can it be said that a minister stands up faithfully who does not bring these marks and tests to bear upon the consciences of the people to whom he preaches, that his hearers may have an evidence whether their religion came down from the Father of lights, or was stolen by their own pilfering fingers, and was palmed upon them by the craft of Satan. I think our text, if the Lord enable me tightly to handle it, will furnish us with some such tests and marks as I have alluded to, and thus be a means in the Spirit's hands whereby we may come to some decision whether or not the work of grace is begun, and is being carried on in our souls.

The prophet, speaking in the name of the Church, says, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

I. Now there is one word on which the text turns, one pin or pivot on which the truth contained in it revolves, and that is the word "living". "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" If this be the case, we cannot move a single step forward until we have examined this little word, and come to some decision as to what is meant by it. Who then is "a living man?" That question must be

settled at the outset. I believe then that by the expression is meant a spiritually living man, one into whom the Holy Ghost has breathed a new and divine nature, and brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light—a man whom He has made eternally alive, and by His sovereign and supernatural operation has quickened from a death in trespasses and sins.

But this great, unspeakably great and mighty revolution cannot take place in a man without his being more or less sensible of it. How sensible our bodies are to even the minutest touch! Not a pain can affect any member without some sensation being communicated to the whole. The heart cannot palpitate, the head cannot ache, the cheek cannot flush, the hands cannot burn, without distinct feeling and perceptible consciousness. Shall our bodies then have all these distinct perceptions of everything that affects them and shall our souls have a divine operation carried on in them by the hand of God, and yet not be conscious of any feeling at all? Shall a man be tremblingly alive to every minute thing that affects his body, and yet not alive to that mighty revolution which the Holy Ghost effects in his soul? No; depend upon it, whatever work there be going on in the soul, there must be some distinct and perceptible feeling precisely corresponding to the work so carried on. If the work be deep and powerful, equally deep and powerful will be the feelings; if the work be less decided and less intense, the weaker and more indistinct will be the spiritual sensations; and if the work be utterly absent, then will there be an utter absence of feeling.

Now among the many feelings and sensations which exist in every divinely quickened soul, we may specially instance complaint as one, and as such it is clearly pointed out in our text. "Wherefore should a living man complain?" As though complaint was the mark of life, and as if he who never complained was dead in trespasses and sins. But the text says, "Wherefore should a living man complain?" as though it asked, "What causes this complaint? Whence does it spring, and what is its ground?"

To this inquiry we may reply,

1. He complains of his sins; and this complaint on account of sin is one of the first marks of the spiritual existence of the life of God in his soul. The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal His Son with power, wherever He intends to make the gospel to be "a joyful sound," He makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. Sure I am that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint.

The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God's people under the burden of sin. "My wounds stink and are corrupt," cries one, "because of my foolishness. I am troubled: I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" Ps 38:5,6. "My soul," cries another, "is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave" Ps 88:3. "He hath led me," groans out a third, "and brought me into darkness, but not into light" La 3:2. A living man needs must cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him, without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy.

Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself" Jer 31:18. It shows that he has something to mourn over, something to make him groan being burdened; that sin has been opened up to him in its hateful malignancy; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue, but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God.

2. But the living man will complain not only of sin, but on account of the absence of those things which he desires to feel. Thus he will complain that God hides His face from him; that the

groans and sighs of his heart never appear to reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; that the Lord does not appear in his soul; that He does not sweetly reveal His peace in his conscience; that He does not favour him with testimonies that he is eternally His, and is interested in the blood and love of His dear Son; and that, with all his sighs and cries, he cannot bring down the anxiously desired blessing into his heart, nor feel Christ formed in him the hope of glory.

3. He will complain too of the inward workings of his base nature, and of the deep corruption of his desperately wicked heart. He will groan under the temptations and fiery darts of the wicked one, and the dreadful thoughts that are so violently injected into his mind. And at other times, he will complain of hardness of heart, of darkness of mind, of barrenness of soul, of complete helplessness and impotency to anything spiritually good. He will complain that sin will work in him; that, do what he will, he cannot do anything to please himself, and therefore he can do nothing to please God. The living man will be always a complaining man. He will be more or less one of those of whom the prophet speaks, who "sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" Eze 9:4. Like righteous Lot in Sodom, he will "vex his righteous soul day by day" with a sight and sense of his internal wickedness.

II. But the prophet in the text asks a question, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" As though he would remonstrate with him for complaining, and assure him that he had after all no good ground nor solid foundation for his complaint; for he adds, "a man for the punishment of his sins?" As though he should say, "Let a living man be full of sorrows. Are they not all richly deserved? Have not his sins merited every affliction bodily or mental that can come upon him?"

But we must not understand by the word "punishment," anything of a vindictive nature. God never punishes the sins of His elect penally; that is, not as He punishes the sins of the reprobate. The eternal covenant forbids this. "Fury is not in Me," saith the

Lord Isa 27:4. The elect are accepted in Jesus, are pardoned in Him, are complete in Him. This is their eternal and unalterable covenant standing—the fruit and effect of their everlasting union with the Son of God. But though this forbids punishment in its strictly penal sense, it by no means excludes chastisement. Thus we are not to understand by the word “punishment” in the text, the infliction of God’s righteous wrath—that foretaste of eternal damnation with which, sometimes even in this life, He visits the ungodly; but it signifies that chastisement which is the privilege of the heir, and distinguishes him from the bastard. It is under this chastisement, then, that the living man is brought to complain, and he will often see in the afflictions that befall him, the rod of the Lord as the chastisement of sin. When he thus sees light in God’s light, he may justly say, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” Are they not chastisements, not punishments; the rod of a Father’s correction, not the vindictive stroke of offended justice?

Perhaps his property is lost through unlooked-for circumstances, or the roguery of others; and he is brought down from comparative affluence to be a poor man. When he can see that this is a chastisement for his pride and carnality in former days, he is able to put his mouth in the dust. Or if the Lord afflict him in his body so that he shall scarcely enjoy a day’s health, when he sees and feels how he abused his health and strength when he possessed them, and at the same time perceives from how many hurtful snares his bodily affliction instrumentally preserves him, he is able at times to bear it meekly and patiently. He may have, too, serious afflictions in his family, or find, like David, “his house not so with God” as he could wish; but when he sees that a sickly wife or disobedient children are but so many strokes of chastisement, and far lighter than his sins demand; when he sees that they come from the hand of love, and not from eternal wrath—that they are the stripes of a Father, not the vindictive strokes of an angry Judge, he feels then that love is mingled with chastisement, and his spirit

is meekened, and his heart softened, and he is brought down to say, "Wherefore should a living man complain?" Why should he complain, when these very severe stripes are chastisements inseparable from heirship, and when they come from a kind hand which is thus conforming him to the image of Jesus Christ?

Now, until a man gets there he cannot but complain. Until he is brought spiritually to see that all his afflictions, griefs and sorrows are chastisements and not punishments, and is able to receive them as the stripes of love, he must and will complain. But, generally speaking, before the Lord lifts up the light of His countenance upon him, before He gives him a sense of peace in his conscience, He will bring him "to accept," as the Scripture speaks Le 26:41, "of the punishment of his iniquity". He will thus receive these strokes of chastisement with a subdued spirit; he will confess that they are justly deserved; and his obstinacy and rebelliousness being in a measure broken, he will lie as a poor and needy supplicant at the foot of the cross.

III. But we pass on to show from the words of the text what is the effect of this chastisement. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

Now, I believe in my conscience that there are hundreds, I might say thousands, of professors who have never known in the whole course of their religious profession what it is to have "searched and tried their ways;" to have been put into the balances and weighed in the scales of divine justice; or to have stood cast and condemned in their own feelings before God as the heart-searching Jehovah. From such a trying test, from such an unerring touchstone, they have ever shrunk. And why? Because they have an inward consciousness that their religion will not bear a strict and scrutinizing examination. Like the deceitful tradesman, who allures his customers into the back shop where the light of the sun does not shine, in order to elude detection when he spreads his flimsy madeup goods before them, so those who have an inward consciousness that their religion is not of heavenly origin, shun the light. As the Lord says,

“Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” Joh 3:20,21. I desire on this point to speak to your consciences. If you know nothing of having from time to time your ways searched and tried by God’s Word, or if you rise up with against an experimental, heart-searching ministry that would try them for you, it shows that there is some rotten spot in you—something that you dare not bring to the light. The candle of the Lord has not searched the hidden secrets of your heart; nor have you cried with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps 139:23,24

The effect, then, of the chastisement spoken of in the text is to produce this self-examination. “Let us search and try our ways.” The man under divine chastisement begins to examine the root of his religion. He can no longer take it upon credit, but he looks into the very foundation of his profession—into its commencement and progress, and at all the circumstances connected with his first setting out, to try whether he received his religion from God or from man.

But the text speaks of “ways”. “Let us search and try our ways.” What are these ways? Some of these are ways of the flesh. The man has fallen perhaps into circumstances of temptation; Satan has spread snares for his feet, and he has become entangled in the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life 1Jo 2:16. Chastisements are sent to bring him out of these snares; and their effect is that he begins to “search his ways;” and as the Spirit of the Lord as a Spirit of judgment and of godly fear operates in his conscience, he finds that these ways were not good, but were ways of sin and death.

But as he searches and tries his ways, he begins to find that not only his worldly ways, but that his religious ways also will not bear

a strict investigation. As the light of truth falls into his conscience, and is attended with a divine quickening in God's way Ps 119:37, everything is brought under the strict scrutiny of this light. As the apostle says, "All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" Eph 5:13.

When a man thus begins to examine his ways since he first spiritually felt the power of eternal realities, they are all weighed up in his conscience one by one. He begins by examining the root of his religious profession, and looks at its very first commencement—at the time and manner of his first setting out. Did he begin with the Lord, or did the Lord begin with him? What was the foundation and origin of that profession of vital godliness in which he now finds himself? Was it taken up from worldly motives? Was any pecuniary advantage gained thereby? Was it founded on personal affection? Did it proceed from the persuasion of father, or mother, or Sunday school teacher? If conscience is here on his side, and he finds no corrupt root at the foundation, he is encouraged to proceed a little further. He will look at his first convictions, and he is encouraged to believe from their nature and effects that they were of God. This leads him on to look at his reception of the gospel. How did he receive the gospel? Was it "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power?" 1Co 2:4 Did he "receive it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe?" 1Th 2:13. And how did he receive the doctrines of grace? Did he get them from men? Did he receive them with the outward ear only, or did they drop into his soul with dew, unction, and power? And what was their effect upon him? Did they bring contrition into his soul? Did faith receive them, love embrace them, and hope anchor in them? If he has attended to the ordinance of baptism, and is a member of a gospel church, he will search and examine how he was led into that ordinance, and what induced him to make a public profession. He will thus search and try his ways, and bring to the test of truth and conscience the whole of his religious course, that he may have some satisfactory

testimony whether his ways have been directed by the leadings of the Spirit, and have sprung from the inward teachings of that divine Instructor, or whether they are from the self-will of the flesh, from nature under the garb of religion, or from Satan's delusions as an angel of light. This is "making straight paths for our feet," as the Holy Ghost directs Heb 12:13; "examining ourselves whether we be in the faith" 2Co 13:5; "judging ourselves that we might not be judged" 1Co 11:31. Thus the soul of David was engaged when he appealed to the Lord Ps 139:1, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me."

But the Lord must search and try us by His Spirit before we shall search and try ourselves. As the prophet speaks, "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees" Zep 1:12. And the Lord often makes use of trials and afflictions to bring His candle to search all the inward parts Pr 20:27. It is from some experience of these searchings that I am led to search others. I cannot take my own religion upon trust, and therefore I cannot take other people's. I cannot receive for myself any religion except that which the Lord is pleased with His own blessed mouth to drop into my soul, and with His own hand to work in my heart; and why should I receive yours if it do not come in the same way? I am well satisfied that no religion but what came from heaven can take a man to heaven; that there is no solid hope but that which God imparts, no genuine love but that which God sheds abroad in the heart, no filial confidence but such as arises from the light of God's countenance. I am perfectly satisfied that nothing else can support a man in the trying hour—nothing else can take him through the dark valley, or land him safe on Canaan's shore. Therefore I should not be honest to you if I did not weigh up your religion in the same scale in which I weigh mine, and apply the same standard to it as to my own. I know such will be the effect when the Lord begins to search us, and there will be a cry in the soul, "Let us search and try our ways." La 3:40

And what, for the most part, will be the fruit and result of a man's thus searching and trying his ways, but that he will find his ways not good, that he has backslidden from the Lord, that he has taken much upon credit, that in thousands of instances he has put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter? He will find too that he has invariably been deceived, except when the Lord has been pleased to instruct him; cast down, except when the Lord was pleased to uphold him; deluded by the devil and his own heart, except when the Lord was pleased mercifully to undeceive him, and show him Satan's devices. And the end of all his searching will be that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

IV. But we gather from the text another effect of this humbling experience. It leads him to cry, "Let us turn again to the Lord:" as though he had done nothing else but turn from Him; as though every way not of God's instruction in the soul had been a way of death; every path not of God's leading, a way of error. When he is brought here, to be feelingly destitute of creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, to see that he has shown himself to be a fool every time he trusted in his own wisdom, that he has fallen every time he trusted in his own strength—when he is brought to be thus feelingly destitute, thus experimentally helpless, then there will be this sincere and hearty turning to the Lord. "I will arise and go to my father," said the repenting prodigal. Thus the effect of these exercises is to bring him to personal dealings with Jehovah. He must now have a religion not to be cloaked over and taken for granted, but a close, personal, individual religion before God, and in his own conscience. Nothing else will ever satisfy me. I would sooner be taking my full swing in the world than have a name to live and be dead—with a form of godliness while I denied its power; and I believe, if you are honest men and women, such are your feelings also.

When the soul then is brought to this point, there will be a turning again to the Lord, as to the only source of all vital godliness—the whole and sole Saviour from the wrath to come. The

soul feels that in His favour is life, and that His lovingkindness is better than life itself; that in the smiles of His countenance peace and joy alone are to be found, and that the manifestations of His presence is a begun happiness—a begun heaven below. But until there is this complaining on account of sin, and this searching of our ways, there is not a “turning again to the Lord.” O how people deceive themselves! O the depth of human hypocrisy! A man may kneel down and offer up what he sincerely believes to be prayer, and may call that personal dealing with God, when all the time the Spirit of grace and supplications has never visited his heart. To have personal dealings with God is to be taken by the Spirit into the presence of His heart-searching eye, to be stript of the hypocrisy of the flesh, to be emptied, for the time, of superstition and self-righteousness, and to feel as though there were not a single individual on the face of the globe but yourself and God; as if you were standing on some solitary spot, and communing with God, and He with you. To be brought here is to know something of close work. I do not believe that a man will be saved who does not know more or less of this; he will never know anything of the sweetness and preciousness of a revealed Jesus, until he is brought to this close work; to feel as though he stood alone with the eye of God fixed upon him, as if there were no other object, and as if that look penetrated through all the covers of nature and hypocrisy into those depths of conscience, into which the eye of God alone can come. When a man is brought to this, he is not to be fobbed off any longer with pretences; he is brought to such close quarters that nothing can satisfy him but a testimony from God’s own lips breathed into his soul, to raise up faith, hope, love, and confidence in his heart.

Now, look through all your religion. I speak to those who make a profession. Is there any of this work going on in your conscience? Believe me, there must be some heart-and-conscience-work of this kind before a man can have a testimony that he is a child of God. And this will be repeatedly taking place in the soul. After long sea-

sons of deadness and carelessness when life seems well-nigh extinct, there will be a turning again to the Lord, a casting our back upon the world and the flesh, and a setting of the face toward Zion.

V. But the prophet goes on to say, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands." As though there was a great deal of lifting up the hands without the lifting up of the heart, and as though the prophet felt there had been too much of this even in his own case, for though he speaks here in the name of the Church, he includes himself also as one of the offending parties. When, then, the Lord lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when He makes the living man complain on account of deserved chastisement for his sins, and thus brings him to search and try his ways, He raises up an earnest cry in his soul. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands," and not the hands without the heart; not the mere bended knee; not the mere grave and solemn countenance, that easiest and most frequent cover of hypocrisy; not the mere form of prayer, that increasing idol of the day, but the lifting up of the heart with the hand.

This is the only true prayer, when the heart is poured out before the throne of grace, the Spirit interceding for us and within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Joh 4:24 He is not to be pleased with man-made prayer, nor the "vain repetitions" of daily liturgies. Garments, postures, forms and ceremonies of man's invention draw not down His approbation. The contrite heart and broken spirit, the inward panting of the soul after His manifested presence, the heaving sigh and penitential tear will be regarded by Him when He will turn away from lip service and "bodily exercise." 1Ti 4:8

VI. But there is much also implied in the words, "God in the heavens" This expression represents Him as seated far above all heavens, enthroned in light, majesty, and glory unspeakable; and yet sitting on His throne of mercy and grace to bless the soul that waits upon Him, full of love and compassion for the poor and needy

who lifts up his heart together with the hand, that he may receive pardon and peace out of Jesus' fulness, and pants with unutterable longings that the lord Himself would graciously smile and beam love and favour into his soul. This lifting up of the heart—the only true and acceptable prayer—no man can create in himself. God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will, can alone work in us thus “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” Nature cannot, with all her efforts, and all her counterfeit imitations of vital godliness, accomplish this spiritual sacrifice. She may cut her flesh with lancets, and cry, “Baal, hear us!” from morning till evening, but she cannot bring down the holy fire from heaven. She can lift the hand, but she cannot lift up the heart. Depend upon it, that in this spiritual intercourse with the living God, out of sight and out of reach of the most refined hypocrite and self-deceiver, much of the power of vital godliness lies. This lifting up of the heart when no eye sees and no ear hears, in the daily and often hourly transactions of life, in the lonely chamber, and on the midnight bed, surrounded perhaps by the world, and yet in spirit separate from it—is a secret known only to the living family of God.

Here, then, that I may recapitulate the outline of what has been said, are some marks and testimonies which God has laid down in His Word by which the present state of every man may be more or less clearly determined. Now if you do not wish to deceive yourselves, if God has made you honest, if He has planted His fear in your heart, if He has begun and is carrying on a good work in you, there will be evidences of the existence of the life of God within. Life is the commencement of salvation as an inward reality, for whatever the eternal purposes of God are, or whatever standing the vessel of mercy has in Christ previous to effectual calling, there is no more movement in the soul Godward till life is imparted, than there is natural life and motion in a breathless corpse that lies interred in the churchyard. But wherever divine life is implanted, there will be certain fruits and feelings that spring out of this life. One fruit will be complaint, and this will arise sometimes from a

feeling of the burden of sin, and at others from a sense of merited chastisement from God on account of it. But wherever this complaining is spiritual, there will be accompanying it "an accepting the punishment of our iniquity," and "a putting of our mouth in the dust." Thus where there is spiritual life there will be complaint, confession, and submission; the effect being meekness, brokenness, and humility. This breaks to pieces self-conceit and self-justification, and the result is a searching and trying our ways whether they are of God. The fruit of this search will be, for the most part, a solemn and painful conviction that the greater part have been in the flesh: or, at least, there will be many anxious suspicions which cannot be relieved except by an express testimony from the Lord Himself. This produces a going out of soul unto Him, the cry now being, "Let us turn again to the Lord;" and towards Him the heart turns as to the only source and author of every good and perfect gift. As the quickened soul knows that He is a heart-searching God, this appeal will purge away much hypocrisy and insincerity, and deepen uprightness, sincerity, and godly integrity. And the blessed fruit and end of all this sifting work will be a coming down of gracious answers, divine testimonies, smiles of the Saviour's loving countenance, soft whispers of God's eternal favour, and the blessed witness of the Spirit within.

Thus I think we have laid down in the text a clear outline of the path in which the redeemed walk. And if so, may I not from these words of inspired truth make an appeal to your hearts and consciences whether the Lord has led you at all in this path? Or have you taken up your religion as a man takes up a glove in a hosier's shop—after trying a good many, selecting that which best fits his hand? Thus some here, perhaps, out of the numerous sects and parties spread upon the counter of the religious world, have taken up the Arminian, or the Calvinist, the Independent, or the Baptist glove, and wear their profession as some external distinction. But, my friends, true religion is not to be thus taken up or laid down, where it springs from what God Himself has wrought with divine

power in the conscience. And wherever He works, there will be fruits and effects following.

But some perhaps here cannot at present get much beyond complaint. But this is a mark of life; and He “who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” Php 1:6 He will never leave the soul to die in its complaint. This is “a sickness not unto death,” for “the Lord will bring health and cure.” He who accepts the punishment of sins here shall never be punished hereafter. He who is brought to search and try his ways—who is made honest by God’s internal teaching, will in the end find his ways to be indeed “issues from death.” He who is brought to lift up the heart together with the hands to heaven, will bring down from heaven what his heart goes after. God will answer his desire, and fill his heart with His blessed favours even to overflowing.

But we may, by way of conclusion, give another turn to the first clause of our text, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” With all his trials and temptations, troubles and exercises, has he any real cause to “murmur,” as the margin reads? Is he not ten thousand times better off than those whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have more than heart can wish? Say that he is a poor afflicted creature—sin tormenting and harassing him every day, and that he meets continually with trouble at home and abroad, so that he thinks no poor wretch is altogether so miserable. But after he has exhausted all his piteous tale, it may still be said to him, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” Has he not eternal life in his soul? Is he not an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ? Surely instead of complaining he has reason to rejoice—reason to say, with all his burdens, all his sorrows, all his diseases, “Wherefore should I complain? Is it not better to suffer with Jesus, that I may reign with Him? Is it not better “through much tribulation to enter the kingdom,” than to enjoy all that the world calls good and great, and find eternal perdition at the end?”

37 THE LIFE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED IN THE DEATH OF THE CREATURE

Preached on Tuesday Evening, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

October 18th, 1842,

“For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

2 Cor. 4:11

It is very sweet, as well as instructive, to trace the wisdom of God as manifested in the way wherein the Scriptures of the New Testament were written. They were not revealed in any systematic form; they were framed according to no dry theory of truth, or as a code of doctrines and duties, as a human lawgiver would have modelled them; but in their original form they came forth from the pen of the Holy Ghost just as circumstances arose in the Church. And, for the most part, God overruled all the evils that broke forth from time to time in the Church, that they might draw forth epistles from the breasts of the apostles, the Holy Ghost teaching them how and what to write. Thus, to the turning aside of the Galatians unto “the weak and beggarly elements” of the law, we owe that noble defence of justification contained in Paul’s epistle to that church. To the persecution under which the church at Philippi was suffering we owe that epistle so full of choice experience. To the mistakes of the Thessalonians concerning the second coming of Christ we are indebted for two epistles full of power and sweetness. To the wavering character of the Hebrews we owe that blessed epistle wherein the apostle has so opened and unfolded the spiritual character of the Levitical dispensation. And to the suspicion of the Corinthian church with respect to the call of the apostle to the ministry, we, in a good measure, owe the experimental epistles addressed to them. It is sweet to observe the providence

of God foreseeing that these and similar evils would exist in the Church, and permitting them to break forth in the times of the apostles, and thus preparing a remedy beforehand, which should be useful to the end of the world, the heart of man being the same in all generations, ever teeming forth with the same corruptions, and to be met only with the same remedies.

It was, then, as I have just hinted, the strong suspicion of the Corinthians respecting the call of the apostle Paul to the ministry that drew out of his bosom much of his personal experience. The second epistle to the Corinthians more especially abounds with it, and no chapter in it more than that which contains our text. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

But we should indeed be mistaken if we limited the experience contained in the text to the apostle Paul, as though it were some of his personal or ministerial experience, with which we, as individuals, had nothing to do. On the contrary, it is so worded as to take in all the quickened family of God. "We which live," says the apostle, as though he would include every living soul whom God the Holy Ghost had quickened into spiritual life. With God's blessing, then, we will look at the words the apostle has here dropped, and see whether we can trace a similar experience in any of our hearts.

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

I. The first thing which strikes the mind is the expression, "We which live"—indeed, it is the key of the whole. It cuts off at one decisive stroke all who are dead in sins or dead in a profession, and draws that narrow and discriminating line which every one taught of God will always draw. Thus it sets all aside except the quickened family of God; and with the same decisive hand that sets aside all who are dead Godward, it lays down a searching line of experience to try the people of God themselves. And this, we may observe, is one important use of vital experience as laid down in the Scrip-

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tures, that the family of God may be tested thereby, and brought to the touchstone, whether the work upon their hearts be real or not.

Then, "we which live," includes all whom God has quickened, and into whom He has breathed a new nature—all in whom He has begun and is carrying on the work of faith with power. And how much is summed up in these words, "we which live!" For what is this life but life everlasting? As Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). And again, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). This spiritual and eternal life was from all eternity stored up for the elect in the Son of God as their covenant Head, that they might receive it out of His fulness who filleth all in all; and into the heart of each vessel of mercy is this divine and supernatural life breathed in the appointed time. Whatever be their distance from God through sin, however "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," when the appointed time to favour Zion is come, life and light are breathed into their souls that they may live for ever, that they may see Christ's glory, and sit down with Him in His kingdom. But before they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of that weight of glory to which they are predestinated, there is a spiritual process to be undergone, a path to be trod, an experience to be carried on with power in their souls. And it is in the possession of this experience that we find the traces of the footsteps of the flock—the landmarks which God has set up in Zion.

II. The first decisive step in this spiritual process is contained in the words, "We which live are alway delivered unto death." But the "death" thus spoken of clearly cannot mean temporal death, for that meaning would be utterly inconsistent with the remainder of the text, and with the expression "alway;" for temporal death can be but once, whilst the death spoken of in the text is a frequent or perpetual one. It must mean therefore a death experimentally, a death in the soul, not a death of the body.

But it may be asked, "For what purpose is this delivering of the soul unto death? What end is it to answer? What good result is it to produce?" We shall best answer this inquiry by showing the nature of this death. And we may define it, in a few words, to consist in an experimental destruction of everything that is inconsistent with that life which God himself has breathed into the soul. And as frequently in nature, so usually in grace, there is a lingering death before dissolution takes place. The seeds of death are in many persons months or years before the last breath is drawn. And so at the very beginning of a work of grace spiritual dying commences; the gradual dissolution of that life to self, sin, and Satan, which every natural man lives. Thus before the blessed Spirit quickened the soul it was alive to self and dead to God; but when a new and spiritual life is breathed into it, a mighty revolution takes place, and it begins to die to self, and live to God. It is this dying to self in the various branches in which the soul formerly lived to itself, of which the text speaks.

But there is something very striking in the expression, "We which live are alway delivered unto death." The sufferers of this death do not deliver themselves to it, but it is done for them and in them. In this sense God's people never commit spiritual suicide. No man ever put death into his own soul whereby self was crucified; but it is done in him by a sovereign act of Almighty power. The figure is taken from a criminal who is carried by the executioner to the place of execution; not one who goes of himself to die. This is the error of the Arminians; we may call them in this sense religious suicides. Though, after all, in them it is more mock than real, and rather resembles the stage death of an actor than a true self-immolation. But the people of God never commit this self-inflicted death; for it is that from which they shrink, which they rebel against, and to which they will never submit till God Himself kills them; for "the Lord killeth, and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." The same idea that it is the act of another, and not of ourselves, is contained in another

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expression of the apostle in this same epistle (2 Cor. 1:9), "We had the sentence of death in ourselves." The sentence of death is a judicial term, and clearly means not self-condemnation, but a decision from the lips of another, and that from one armed with authority to pronounce, and power to execute it.

III. But we will look a little at the idea couched in the expression "death." We know what a ghastly object death is naturally, and that he is the king of terrors to every man who is not enjoying a sense of his interest in Christ and the favour of God. If then we are to carry the figure out, the meaning which we have couched in the expression of the apostle must be something analogous to death naturally, and to our conceptions and feelings with respect to it. Thus the death experimental to which the soul is delivered must be as painful, as dreadful, and as much shrunk from spiritually as natural death is naturally.

It points out, therefore, a thorough destruction of that which is naturally dear. Look at natural death in its aspect to the natural man. It comes to take him from all his delights, and from all his schemes; to remove him from the bosom of his family, and sever him from all on which his heart is set, and in which all his affections are engaged. It comes as a gloomy messenger to take him from the things which alone he understands, which alone he loves, in which his heart is wholly wrapped; and to bear him away to an awful and dreaded eternity. Such is the aspect that death naturally wears. Take this idea into spiritual things. This experimental death, then, to which we are delivered, and into which God by a sovereign act of power brings the soul, is that from which the flesh shrinks, for it comes as a sentence of destruction upon those things to which it so closely cleaves.

1. Our carnal wisdom, for instance, is a thing to which we naturally cleave. In this day, especially, when religious education and the exercise of the intellect upon the Scriptures is the great Diana of the Ephesians, the temptation to cleave to our own wisdom in the things of God is particularly strong. But when God comes by

a sovereign act of power, and delivers us over unto death, in so doing He kills us to that wisdom in which we lived, and, so far as the things of God are concerned, passes an internal sentence of condemnation upon those natural abilities which we were taught to cultivate, and in the exercise of which we found pleasure. Who ever possessed a finer understanding, or received a better education, than Saul of Tarsus? But “what was once gain to him, that he counted loss for Christ;” and he himself proved in soul experience what he so pointedly declares, “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor. 3:18, 19). God by His Spirit makes an effectual stab at all creature wisdom when He enlightens the soul to see and feel its blindness and ignorance, and its utter impossibility of knowing anything savingly but by divine manifestation.

2. So, again, with respect our own righteousness. By nature we can have no understanding of any other righteousness than that which consists in obedience to the law. Whatever dim or doctrinal notions we may have of Christ’s righteousness, we are unacquainted with it as our righteousness till it is personally revealed to us. A part therefore of the execution of this sentence “to deliver unto death,” is the killing us to our own righteousness. The apostle says, “When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” How did he die? Not naturally, but spiritually. The law as a manifestation of condemnation and death came into his conscience, and its spirituality being opened up to his soul, it came as a killing sentence against his righteousness as well as against his sins, manifesting it to be filthiness, and showing the pollution of his heart and the defilement of every thought, word, and deed.

3. So, again, with respect to all false hopes. We read of “the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish.” This false hope, whatever it rest upon, whether the good opinion of others, reformation of life, acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, or anything short of “good hope through grace,” must be delivered unto death. Whilst

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carnal hope—that is every hope which springs out of or centres in the flesh—lives in the soul, spiritual hope cannot reign. The death of the one is the life of the other; and thus they resemble two rivals for one throne; one must die, that the other may live; one must go to the block, that the other may hold the sceptre.

4. So, too, with respect to all our creature religion. There are few who do not profess some kind of religion; though this is, for the most part, traditional, and based on various grounds, as well as called by different names. What these grounds or what these names are it matters little so long as it stands in the flesh, and a profession may be as much based on the creature in the highest Calvinist as in the lowest Arminian. This religion, more or less of which we all naturally possess, of whatever character it be that stands in the flesh and springs from the creature, does not stand in the power of God; is not set up by the Holy Ghost in the heart. However specious, therefore, it may be in appearance, however near it approach the truth, however undoubted by others, however idolised by ourselves, it must be delivered unto death, that the religion from God, the religion that saves the soul, the religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of the Holy Ghost, may be set up in the heart upon the wreck and ruin of all the religion of the creature.

It seems a little thing, comparatively speaking, for a man to have his sins taken from him and delivered unto death; it may seem in many cases a harder struggle for a man to part with his self-righteousness: but when we come to something deeper, something more intricately interweaved round our heart-strings—our religion—this is the hardest stroke of all. For this is to what we are trusting to save us from endless misery. To take away this is something like flying over a bridge, and seeing the last arch cut away before our eyes, and the roaring flood opened below. There is no retracing our steps over the bridge of life; and to find our religion, the last arch over the flood, fall to pieces, and leave us shivering in the prospect of eternity, is terrible indeed. Why, this is the last thing a man will naturally come to. A man can part with his sins,

with his companions, with his pleasures: but when it comes to his fleshly religion which he has been idolizing, when the Spirit of God takes that, and delivers it over unto death, that is one of the last strokes that take place in severing the head of creature righteousness. I believe it requires some very sharp work in a man's soul to be brought here. I have known the time when I used to roll upon my bed, and almost count how many months it might be before I was in eternity; for I feared I had a mortal sickness in my body, and felt little else but guilt and condemnation in my soul. Here was the sifting time for all my religion that stood in the flesh. When we come into these straits, and find no well grounded hope to support the soul in the trying hour, this will prove whether our faith stands in the wisdom of men, or in the power of God. Then whatever we have received of God lives, but whatever we have received from the creature withers and dies.

IV. But mark the words, "we which live are always delivered unto death." What! not once only? What! is the head of creature religion not only once to be severed from the bleeding corpse? No; "We which live are always delivered unto death." Therefore the apostle says, "I die daily;" "in deaths oft;" death worketh in us;" words of similar import and similar force. The flesh is like the fabled hydra; as fast as one head was cut off another grew in its place. Creature religion has a hundred hydra heads. Let one be cut off; straightway another grows out of the old neck. Or we may compare it to the ivy that grows out of the wall; you may cut it down to the very stump, and leave apparently not a remnant; but as long as the root is in the wall, it will shoot forth again. So whatever cuttings and killings our fleshly religion may receive, it will shoot out again, the principle being more or less perpetually at work.

Day by day then there is more or less of this being "delivered unto death." A sentence of execution is passed upon the flesh as it seeks to reign and rule in our hearts; a court of conscience is erected in the soul, as the solemn vice-regent of Christ, whose of-

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fice it is to deliver over unto death the flesh as it sprouts forth. Does our carnal wisdom spring up? The King's commissioner passes sentence, and it is "delivered unto death." Its head is cut off. Does our legal righteousness spring up? Does it assume some new form, and wear some fresh disguise? Sentence is passed, and it is delivered unto death. Do our lusts rise, our passions begin to storm and swell? Sooner or later they are called before this court of review, are sentenced and delivered to death. Does pride begin to work? Does hypocrisy lift its hateful head? Does presumption puff us up? The rebels may seem to have the mastery for a time, but when the blessed Spirit acts as a spirit of judgment within, the traitors are seized, and a solemn sentence of execution is passed upon them. Conscience made tender in God's fear, discerns the workings of the creature under all its shapes. It is a kind of spiritual police to detect the felon, whatever garb he wears. Much of its divinely-constituted office consists in keenly scrutinizing the workings of the flesh. Its eyes have been anointed with heavenly eye-salve to discern the precious from the vile, and its hands armed with authority to seize and execute every religious and irreligious traitor that would usurp Christ's throne in the soul.

It is in this heart and conscience work that much of the inward conflict consists. The mere professor may be puffed up with spiritual pride, and call it humility; a hardened and seared conscience he may term gospel liberty; he may walk in the most daring presumption, and call it good confidence and the assurance of faith; but no such deceit is permitted in the heart that is made honest by grace. There is a spiritual eye in the soul that detects and arrests the felon, and there is a spiritual sword that is drawn out against him as soon as detected. Do we not sometimes experience this? When we feel the risings of pride, is there not a solemn admonition against it in the soul? Or the workings of hypocrisy when they heave and ferment within, is there not a check upon them? If we have ever been betrayed into any open or secret sin, has not conscience borne its condemning sentence against us? If temper

break forth, is there not something that smites us with remorse? If the lustful eye is looking on our neighbour's wife, is there not a reproach of conscience felt? If a revengeful thought is indulged, is there not a secret monitor who detects it, and passes sentence of condemnation upon it? David knew something of this when he had cut off the skirt of Saul's robe (1 Sam. 24:5).

By this secret work going on in the court of conscience, by this daily conflict, is the living soul distinguished from every other; and in this mainly consists "being delivered unto death."

V. But why should the people of God be thus continually delivered unto death? The Holy Ghost, by the pen of the Apostle, gives us the reason: "For Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." "For Jesus' sake,"—not for the sake of the creature. That the crown might be put upon the brow of the rightful owner; that the creature might have all the shame, and that Christ might have all the glory.

But the blessed Spirit goes on more particularly to show how Jesus is thus glorified. He therefore adds, "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Observe the words—not merely that the life of Jesus might be, but that it might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. It is the manifestation of it—the discovery of it—the bringing it to light which the Apostle points out. Life is one thing, the manifestation of life is another. Thus in the first quickening of the soul life is communicated, but until it is delivered unto death this life is not manifested. This life is "the life of Jesus," that is, the new and hidden spiritual life of which He is the Author. Thus the apostle says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear," &c. (Col. 3:3, 4). This hidden and spiritual life is only brought to light, and only comes forth into action as the sentence of death takes place within; and thus this manifestation of the life of Jesus is in proportion to the delivering of the soul to death, because in this death only it is manifested, and out of this death it springs.

1. To make my meaning clearer, I will run over some of those

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instances in which I have shown there is a delivering over unto death. Take our own wisdom. It is part of the creature, something that however refined and cultivated still stands in the flesh, a member of our earthly Adam. It must therefore come to nought. Sentence has been passed upon it (1 Cor. 2: 6); and it must be delivered unto death. But why? Not that God's people may be fools and idiots, but that a new wisdom may reign and rule in its place; that we may find and feel a deeper, higher, nobler wisdom communicated out of Christ's fulness; in other words, that Christ Himself may be our "wisdom," as of God He is made to be to His Church (1 Cor. 1:30). Then, as our earthly wisdom dies, as we become less and less able to understand truth of ourselves, as our plans are defeated, as our projects come to nought, as our schemes are blasted, as we begin to find ourselves ignorant and fools in the things of God—as we thus find our once boasted wisdom and understanding given over unto death, and we acquiesce in that death, there is, to our surprise, a new wisdom communicated, a new light springing up to our solemn wonder, a spiritual understanding in the things of God into which we could not enter, the very existence of which we did not know, whilst looking to and leaning upon our natural understanding. This is called in Scripture, "An unction from the Holy One," and "The anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:20, 27). This is a fruit of the life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal flesh; and it gives light, power, knowledge, direction, opens the Scriptures, and leads the soul into those paths, into which it could not come, and of which it knew nothing whilst leaning on the wisdom of the flesh.

2. So with respect to our own strength. There was a time when you and I were strong in fleshly confidence, when we had no idea that we could not resist temptation and master sin, and overcome the world, and by our own strength get possession of the prize. But we have found, to our shame, the full meaning of those words, the spiritual sense of which we were once so ignorant of: "When we were yet without strength" (Rom. 5:6); and again, "Without Me

ye can do nothing.” We find now that we have no strength, that we are unable to bring forth anything to God’s praise, that we are defenceless against sin, that we are unable to resist the fiery darts of the wicked one. We thus learn a new lesson, and after repeated slips begin to call upon the Lord to succour and help us, and then find, more or less, “His strength made perfect in our weakness.” And perhaps few learn this lesson more painfully, and yet more effectually, than a minister of Christ. Till he has lost his natural wisdom, he is never wise unto salvation, nor able to minister in spiritual things to the profit of God’s people. But then to find his natural wisdom and strength delivered unto death, to see them handed over to the executioner, suspended from the gallows, and buried in the felon’s grave; to have no ability to understand the Word, nor power to open it; to have no spiritual ideas but what are from time to time communicated from above, and to have no door of utterance but what He who has the key of David unlocks, not daring to go back, and yet not knowing how to go on—this is a trying spot for a minister to stand in. But to find in this death of the flesh strength and wisdom communicated, and power and savour breathed into the soul, is to experience “the life of Jesus made manifest in his mortal flesh.”

3. And thus, too, with respect to our own righteousness. When it is delivered to death, carried to prison, and executed, the Lord opens to the eye of faith another righteousness, even Christ’s spotless and glorious righteousness imparted to the believer, in which he stands without spot or blemish. Till our own was delivered over unto death, we had no eyes to see, no heart to pant after, no hands to receive this righteousness; no spiritual discovery of its power, beauty, and glory.

4. So with respect to our creature religion. What a loss to lose it all! But we begin to find built upon its ruins, and growing out of its death, a new religion of a totally different kind; a spiritual, heavenly, saving religion. And whatever painful struggles a man may have had as his old religion sickened and died, when he finds

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a new, a spiritual religion, breathed into his soul of which God Himself is the Author and Finisher, it more than indemnifies him for his loss, and at times fills him with holy wonder and admiration. He is brought to see the life of Jesus thus made manifest in his mortal flesh, working in him a new religion, of which the other was only an imitation and a counterfeit.

5. So with respect to all his false hopes. What a stroke to be left without hope! But to find a good hope through grace, a hope which will support the soul, an anchor sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil; who would not part with all his old hope to get such a new one? Who would not part with “the hope of the hypocrite which shall perish,” for “the hope which maketh not ashamed”?

6. So with respect to all fond and fancied expectations of creature holiness, and what is called “cultivating grace.” To look for patience, and to find rebellion; to cultivate humility, and to find pride; to expect a flourishing crop of holiness, a heart calm and gentle, increasing prayerfulness, watchfulness, and thankfulness, and to find nothing but rebellion and devilism instead—this is to have our expectations “delivered unto death.” But to find from time to time a little true humility, true patience, true resignation, true contentment communicated, this is to have “the life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal flesh.” And is not this a blessed exchange—to have all the worthless notes of our bankrupt bank destroyed, and gold—pure gold, paid into our heart’s exchequer?

VI. But what are we to understand by this expression, “The life of Jesus”? I understand by it that divine and spiritual life in the souls of His people of which Christ is the Source and Author. As He said to His disciples, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” “The life I live in the flesh,” says the Apostle, “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” And again, “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (John 6:57). This life, then, is His mediatorial life; the life that He now lives at the right hand of God, and which He breathes into His

people that they may live for evermore.

But if we live spiritually by the same life that Jesus lives, it must be made manifest. Can a man have life, and there be no symptoms nor manifestations of it? If there is the same life in the quickened elect which Jesus lives at the right hand of God, there must be some internal workings, and some external signs of it. To have spiritual life, then, and have no spiritual feelings; to have neither joys nor sorrows, no temptations and no deliverances, no prayer and no answers; but to glide at ease down the stream of an undisturbed profession, must be a delusion. Such a state resembles the "gross darkness" of which Isaiah speaks when he says, "The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Darkness covering the profane "earth," but "gross darkness"—a deeper, blacker shade, the professing "people."

If, then, there are effects that spring out of the communication of this divine life to the soul, it may be asked: "In what do these effects consist? What are the feelings produced?" We may reply, that they are usually just contrary to what we might expect. When we first set out in religion, being young and ignorant, we made many mistakes and miscalculations. For instance, we thought that religion consisted in having pure hearts and leading holy lives; in serving God to the best of our power, and so on. And when in a measure enlightened into the spiritual nature of true religion, yet we made many mistakes how it was to be obtained. Thus we were looking for life, without knowing that it came through death; for hope, not knowing it sprang up out of despondency; for wisdom, not knowing it was to commence in a knowledge of our own foolishness; for strength, not knowing it was to be made perfect in our weakness. At least, these were my ideas. But when the Lord begins to take the soul more powerfully in hand, He teaches it by His Spirit those humbling lessons of which it was before totally ignorant. And whilst we are under this teaching, we cannot see the end; we are in a labyrinth of confusion. The Lord, it is said, "Leads the blind by a way which they knew not;" and, therefore, depend

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upon it, if you can always or often see your way, you are not one whom God is leading. When, then, the Lord is thus leading His people, He “brings them into darkness, and not into light.” But under this strange, unlooked for leading, we are staggered, and know not what is the matter with us. Instead of holiness we find unholiness, instead of hope despondency, instead of love enmity, instead of patience rebellion, instead of every good and perfect gift, little else but the workings of corrupt nature. O, what a labyrinth! But why is this? To deliver over unto death the pretender to the throne; to put down the rival that Jesus may reign; to “overturn, overturn, overturn, till He come whose right it is.” No man can ever fully or cordially receive Jesus into his soul, kiss His sceptre, bow to His dominion, and embrace it with true affection, unless he has had these rivals dethroned, and his false hopes delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in his mortal flesh.

VII. But what is meant by this expression, “our mortal flesh?” It does not mean the carnal mind, but our earthly tabernacle; and the expression is similar to another in this chapter, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” It is, then, in this poor body, compassed with infirmities, that the life of Jesus is made manifest. This divine life will often spring up in fervent breathings after God—in the actings of living faith, in the sweet intercourse the people of God have with one another, in reading the Scriptures, in the application of precious promises, and under the preached word. From time to time it bubbles up like a spring from its source. Sometimes, indeed, it runs underground, buried as it were under the load of “our mortal flesh;” but again and again it reappears, drawn up by the Sun of Righteousness. “Spring up, O well.” But its risings are ever proportionate to its sinkings. Thus in proportion as we cease to pray naturally, do we pray spiritually; as we cease to hope in the flesh, do we hope in the Lord; as we cease to believe with the head, do we believe with the heart; when we see an end of all perfection in self, then we begin to find perfection in Christ; and when we see noth-

ing in our hearts but sin, misery, and wretchedness, then we begin to taste spiritual consolation. Thus, in proportion as nature sinks, the life of Jesus rises, and is made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Is the soul, then, longing to have sweet manifestations of the life of Jesus? Where must it go to get them? What does the Word of God say? “Whence cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and Death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears” (Job 28:20-22). Till, then, we get to “destruction and death,”—the destruction of fleshly hopes and the death of creature religion, we do not so much as ever hear the fame of true wisdom with our ears. Thus when we get into darkness, then light springs up; when we get to despondency, hope arises; when we are tempted with unbelief and infidelity, faith appears. Thus those are the wisest in whom creature wisdom has most ceased; those are the strongest who have learned most experimentally their own weakness; those are the holiest who have known most of their own filthiness; those are the most religious, in a true sense, who have least religion of their own. So that just in proportion as we are delivered unto death, and execution takes place on what the creature loves, so does the life of Jesus begin to rise and make itself blessedly manifest.

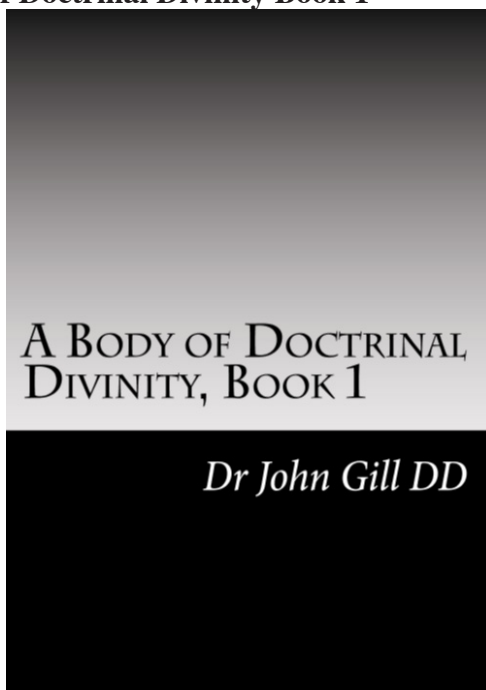
If this be true—if this be the doctrine according to godliness, if it be consistent with the path of life, and in blessed unison with the experience of the saints—if this be the case, what shall we say of those who know, or rather, profess to know (for it is but a profession), all the bright side, and nothing of the dark; who have all faith, and were never tried with unbelief; who have all wisdom, and never felt their folly; who have all strength, and never knew their weakness; who are all calmness, and know neither fretfulness nor impatience; who are ever full of buoyant hope, and never knew despondency? Must we not say that the life of Jesus is not manifest in them? For if it be true—and who dare say it is not, when it is written by the finger of God? that “we which live”—ev-

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ery living soul—not Paul, not Peter only, but every one possessed of spiritual life—”are alway”—day by day, for little else will satisfy the words—”delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” &c., must we not say that those who are never delivered over unto death have not the life of Jesus made manifest in them? Does not this follow as a necessary consequence? Is it not plain that he who knows not the one knows not the other?

There are many true children of God, who are eternally His, yet who cannot make it out to their full satisfaction. Some such may be here. But this you find as a matter of painful experience, that you are “alway delivered unto death.” You find you cannot be as you would fain wish to be. The preacher, perhaps, under whom you sit tells you to be holy, and you feel that you are unclean; to believe, and you find nothing but unbelief; to hope in God’s mercy, and you find nothing but despondency; to meditate, and you find your thoughts at the end of the earth; to exercise patience, and you feel your mind full of rebellion; he exhorts to humility, and you think if there is a proud wretch on the face of the earth, you are one. You cannot make these things square, but God will make them so one day or other. You are passing now under the sentence, “delivered unto death.” Why? To be destroyed? Not so. Something must be destroyed; “the wisdom of the wise” must perish, but not you. Something has the sentence of death pronounced against it, but not your soul. It is a blessed thing to part with our natural wisdom, legal righteousness, and creature religion, that the soul may be saved. If we should keep our own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and false religion, all these would be so many millstone weights to sink the soul into endless woe. Is it not a blessed exchange, then, to part with them all, that when these are delivered unto death the rightful King may reign in the soul; that Jesus may sit upon the throne of the affections? Is it not a blessed exchange to find the life of Jesus made manifest in our bodies—”our mortal flesh?” To find hope rising? Prayer rising? Feeling rising? Are not these a blessed exchange? Yes; such is the mysterious arrangement of God that one

is put to death that the other may live. Have you not reason, then, to bless God, if you know anything of these blessed mysteries? If in any measure you have known what it is to be “delivered unto death?” Not like dead professors whose “eyes stand out with fatness”—who are never exercised with temptation. You have reason to bless God that you know something of these painful though profitable exercises, and thus find that in proportion as you are delivered unto death, the life of Jesus is made manifest. And that life is for ever—the beginning of eternal bliss; the foretaste of endless glory. He that knows anything of this life of Jesus here will be with Him for ever, and bathe his happy soul in that river, “the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” and enjoy the pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore.

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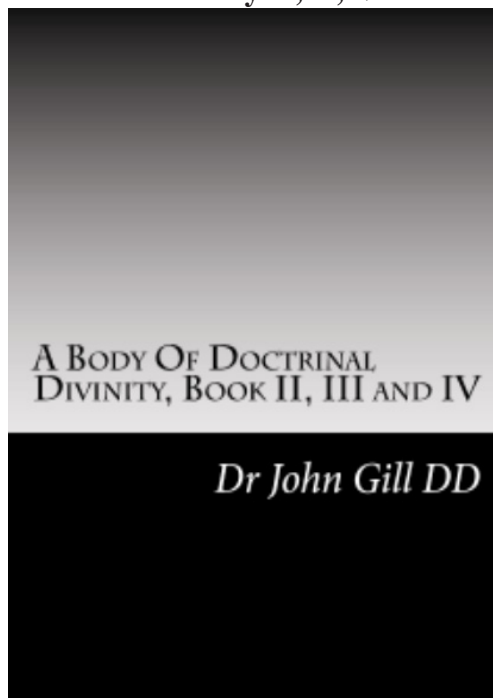
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Chapter 7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven

Chapter 8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God

Chapter 9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ

Chapter 10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ

Chapter 11 Of The Intercession Of Christ

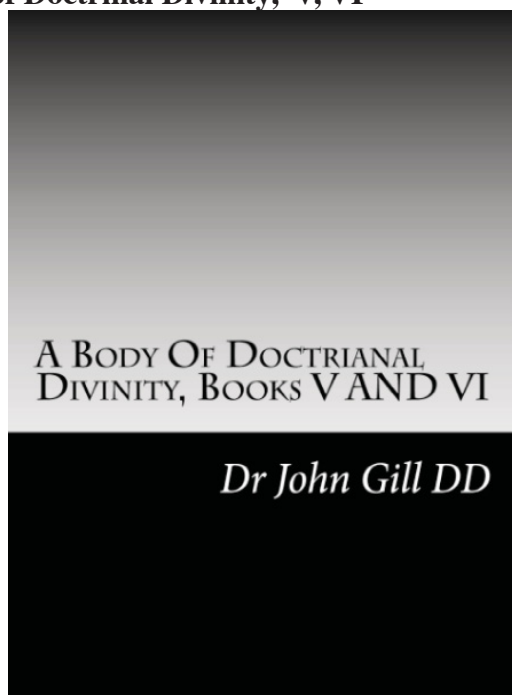
Chapter 12 Of Christ's Blessing His People

As A Priest

Chapter 13 Of The Kingly Office Of Christ

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A System OF Practical Truths

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Chapter 9 Of Adoption Of The Liberty Of The Sons Of God

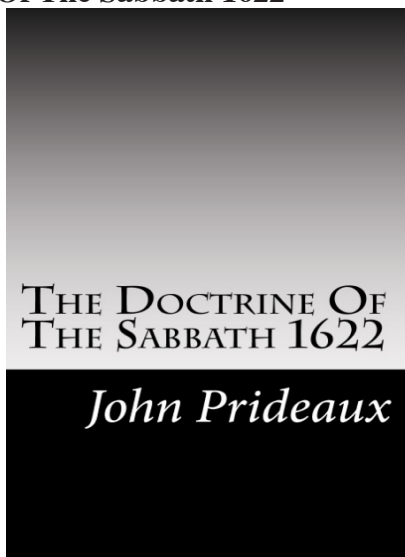
Chapter 11 Of Regeneration

Chapter 12 Of Effectual Calling

Chapter 14 Of Sanctification

Chapter 15 of the perseverance of the saints

The Doctrine Of The Sabbath 1622



Authored by Dr John Prideaux, Created by David Clarke

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

148 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1727722901 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

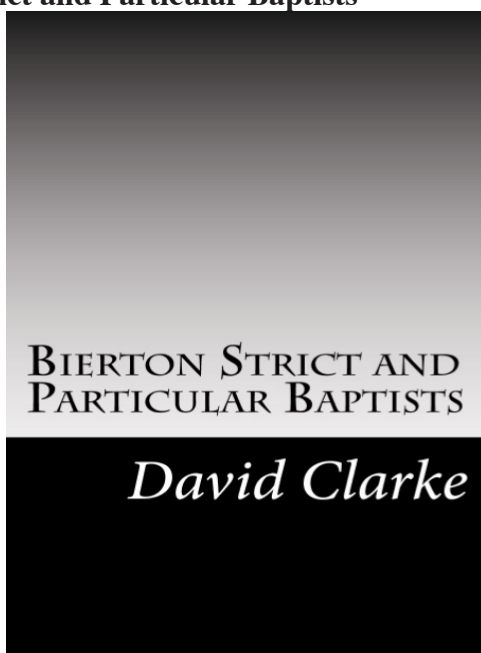
ISBN-10: 1727722906

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

Of all the controverts which have exercised the Church of Christ, there is none more ancient than that of the Sabbath: So ancient that it took beginning even in the infancy of the Church, and grew up with it. For as we read in the Acts There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise the people, and to command them to keep the law of Moses; whereof the Sabbath was apart: Which in the general, as the apostles labours to suppress in their first General Council,

held in Jerusalem: So did S. Paul, upon occasion of whose ministry this controversy first began, endeavor what he could against the particular, shapely reproving those which hallowed yet the Jewish Sabbath and observed days, and months, and times, as if he had bestowed his labor in vain upon them. But more particularly in his epistle to the Colossians, Let no man judge you in respect of a holy day or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which were a shadow of things to come but the body is of Christ. Both which expressions of Paul are in this following discourse produced to this very purpose. Yet notwithstanding all this care both generally of the Apostles and more especially of Paul to suppress this error; it grew up still and had its patrons and abettors.

This reproduction of, 'The doctrine of the Sabbath', by Dr. John Prideaux has been presented for those who have been troubled by the insistence of those religious people who insist that the first day of the week is the Sabbath day and to be kept holy, as dictated by the law of Moses. It is not. We include also Dr. John Gill on the subject of the circumstances of public worship as to place and time. It is the view of this publisher that the time and place of Christian worship it is a matter for the Christian community to decide and is not legislated in the scriptures.

Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists

My Testimony and Confession

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert.E

List Price: \$13.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

376 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1508408277 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1508408270

BISAC: Biography & Autobiography / Religious

This book tells the story and life of David Clarke in the form of an autobiography. It is no ordinary book in that David and his brother were both notorious criminals in the 60's, living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where they were MODs. They were both sent to prison for carrying a fire arm without a license and malicious wounding. They were however both converted from crime to Christ after which they turned their lives around and from crime

to Christ. This story tells of David's Conversion in 1970 and that of Michael, 1999 some 30 years later.

It tells of their time in HMP Canterbury Prison and David's time in HMP Wormwood Scrubs and then Dover Borstal. It also tells of David's criminal activity and the crimes he committed before his miraculous conversion from crime to Christ, during a bad experience on LSD, in 1970.

It tells how he became a Christian over night, how he learned to read in order to come to a fuller knowledge of the gospel. He learned to read through reading the bible and classical Christian literature.

He tells of the event that led to him making a confession to the police about 24 crimes he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968 and of the court case where he was not sentenced.

It tells of his life as a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, which was a Gospel Standard cause, and how he was called by the Lord and sent by the church to preach the gospel.

David tells of the various difficulties that he faced once he discovered the many doctrinal errors amongst the various Christian groups he met and of the opposition that he experience when he sought to correct them. David recorded his experience and finding in his book "The Bierton Crisis" 1984 written to help others.

David's tells how his brother Michael was untouched by his conversion and how he continued his flamboyant lifestyle ending up doing a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996, where he died in 2005.

It tells how David's educated himself and went on to Higher education, and graduated with a Certificate in Education and how he went on to teach Electronics, for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education.

It tells how David felt compelled to write this story under the title, "Converted On LSD Trip". once he got news of his brothers arrest, in the Philippines, via ITN Television news broadcast, in

1995. This book was published when he got news of his brothers conversion from crime to Christ in 1999, which was after serving 5 years of his 16 year sentence.

David tells how Michael too was converted through him reading C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity", and him being convinced that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, after this it tells of David's mission to the Philippines to bring help and assistance to Michael, in 2001 and of their joint venture in helping in the rehabilitation of many former convicted criminals, not only in New Bilibid Prison but other Jails in the Philippines.

This story is told in there book, "Trojan Warriors", that contains the testimonies of 66 notorious criminals who too had turned there lives around, from crime to Christ, 22 of which testimonies are men on Death Row.

David say he believes his story could be of great help to any one seeking to follow the Lord Jesus